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THE TRAGEDY OF GANDHI

[*Paul Laib*

MAHATMA GANDHI
(*From the painting by Oswald Birley*)

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The
TRAGEDY
of
GANDHI

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FOREWORD

No student of Mr Gandhi's career can escape the influence of the standard authorities—Mr Gandhi's autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth ; Mahatma Gandhi : his Own Story*,[1] and *Mahatma Gandhi at Work*,[1] both of which have been edited by Mr C. F. Andrews. There remains the remarkable study by Monsieur Romain Rolland.[1]

Less ambitious, though very helpful, books have been *Mr Gandhi : the Man*,[1] by Millie Graham Polak, and *Entertaining Gandhi*, by Muriel Lester. *The Epic Fast*, by Pyarelal, contains valuable material for a survey of the Untouchable campaign in 1932.

Recent books, which admittedly influenced me as I was writing my own study, are *Years of Destiny*, by Professor J. Coatman; *Renascent India*,[1] by Father H. C. E. Zacharias; *The Indian Chaos*, by F. W. Wilson, and *A Letter from India*, by Edward Thompson.

It would be easy—and yet foolish—to append a full biography of the books which I have perused since I first came to know India some seven years ago. May I, however, record that, while I have never consulted the pages of Mr Edward Thompson and Mr G. Garratt without profit, I number the authors of *A Passage to India* and *Hindoo Holiday* among the best interpreters of India?

Just as I was about to complete this book, Lord Irwin succeeded his father and became Lord Halifax. As few who knew Lord Halifax in India can readily accustom

[1] London : George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

THE APOLOGY

" . . . Macbeth is the tragedy of a man betrayed by an obsession. Caesar is betrayed by an obsession of the desire of glory, Antony by passion, Tarquin by lust, Wolsey by worldly greed, Coriolanus and Timon by their nobleness, Angelo by his righteousness, Hamlet by his wisdom. All fail through having some hunger or quality in excess. Macbeth fails because he interprets with his worldly mind things spiritually suggested to him. God sends on many men ' strong delusion, that they shall believe a lie.' Othello is one such. Many things betray men. One strong means of delusion is the half-true, half-wise, half-spiritual thing, so much harder to kill than the lie direct. The sentimental treacherous things, like women who betray by arousing pity, are the dangerous things because their attack is made in the guise of great things. Tears look like grief; sentiment looks like love; love feels like nobility; spiritualism seems like revelation."

JOHN MASEFIELD: *William Shakespeare.*

OF John Stirling, his friend, Thomas Carlyle has written: " It is better to be unknown than misknown." There is no danger of Mr Gandhi becoming unknown. He has provoked as much literature as any other man living. More than a decade ago M. Romain Rolland saluted him with a biography. Mr C. F. Andrews has devoted his gifts of intellect and imagination so that the people of the world might the better comprehend the mind of the Mahatma. Moreover, Mr Gandhi employed his leisure hours in Yeravda Gaol by writing an autobiography, which, in its way, is as remarkable as the *Confessions of Rousseau*. But an autobiography does not render further biographical studies of no account, as the friends of Anthony Trollope will bear witness. My own short study does not pretend to dim—still less to replace—the great Autobiography; I shall have accomplished no small task if I have led others of my countrymen to read and consider Mr Gandhi's own

words. And yet I claim that even the Autobiography cannot deliver Mr Gandhi from the embarrassment of being misknown.

When I was at Oxford I forgot altogether the claims of my tutors and examiners, and read rather deeply into the vast literature of Napoleon. I was in perpetual pursuit of an answer to the question: "How far was Napoleon the creator rather than the creature of his own greatness?" I did not know that these studies—so little calculated to secure me a good degree—were actually preparing me for my later encounter with one who, in so far as he is a man of peace, is greater than Napoleon; but who, in so far as he trusts his feelings and not his intellect, falls far short of Napoleon's stature.

I first went out to India in 1927, to take up a post recently relinquished by Mr Eric Linklater, author of *Juan in America*. I had just read Miss Mayo's *Mother India*. It took me at least six months before I could rid myself of the last prejudice *Mother India* created for me. Then it took me another six months before my naturally conservative mind understood that Lord Irwin was working out the most complicated Imperial problem of our time in the spirit of Edmund Burke. Only then could I realize that Lord Irwin and Mr Gandhi were pursuing the same goal, though by different paths. It had become only a matter of time when those two paths should converge.

Not until March 1930—four days before the march to Dandi began—did I meet Mr Gandhi face to face; it is fair to claim that we became friends almost at once.

Less than a month later I was making a perilous *trek* across Persia. On Easter Sunday I sat amid the ruins of Persepolis. In the distance a great cloud of dust appeared. Eventually I was able to distinguish a concourse of people, mules and horses. The vast caravan approached and then

moved swiftly by. They were Kashgai tribesmen on the march. Ruined Persepolis concerned them not at all. Near by—in the desolate plain of Murghab—was the crumbling tomb of Cyrus, once called the Great. New Delhi is not the only city planned by the Empire-builders of the East.

Then I went from Persia into Russia. As the train meandered through Georgia and the land of the Cossacks, I realized how little the Soviet experiment has changed the character of the Russian peoples. The Imperial Crown still dominates the minarets and domes of the medieval Kremlin; there would almost certainly be a revolution if M. Stalin attempted to pull it down.

On the day of Mr Gandhi's arrest I was in Berlin. When the Civil Disobedience movement was at its height I was in Quebec, Toronto and Vancouver. On the day that the first volume of the Simon Report was published, I elbowed my way along Fifth Avenue.

In August I returned from Montreal to Cardington as one of the thirteen passengers on board His Majesty's airship the *R.100*. A fellow-passenger was M. Jacques Cartier, direct descendant of the first European to reach the shores of Canada and to found, so his contemporaries thought, a new Empire for France. In mid-Atlantic I entered into an argument on the justice of Mr Gandhi's protest against machinery. My disputant believed that the machine, used intelligently, would solve man's major problems. If the machine has become a curse, he argued, it is because man has not yet learned to appreciate the beauty of leisure. A few weeks later, my friend perished in the flames of the wrecked *R.101*. Yet I do not doubt that his faith lives on.

Friends have told me that my absence from India during some of the most critical months of her recent

history incapacitates me for offering a study of the principal actor in this strange drama. To this argument I reply, that my absence enabled me to see the whole drama; for I have been able to watch from the stalls, the pit and the wings. I have discussed Mr Gandhi with men and women in New York and Berlin. I have conversed with men in Moscow who ill-concealed their impatience with a man fundamentally different in character and aims from their revered Lenin. I have seen Mr Gandhi, therefore, through the eyes of my countrymen and through the eyes of foreigners.

I have no wish, however, to call the American a foreigner. It is a sound instinct which tells him that the history of India is somehow bound up with the history of his own country. When I was last in New York, more than one writer of leading articles, I found, was confusing the Salt Tax with the Stamp Act. But they were right in pointing out that it was not until the loss of the American colonies that—in Pitt's often misquoted words—India became the brightest jewel of the British Crown. And if anyone complains that there is now no public interest in India or in Mr Gandhi, I would invite him to go to Canada. Canada takes the problems of Empire very seriously. She has followed the evolution of the idea of a Federal India closely, for it is a reminder of her own history. Besides, she believes that in thirty years' time she will be a first-class Power. The centre of Empire, according to her prophets, is one day to shift from England to North America. How will new Canada co-operate with ancient India? As I journeyed across the great continent of North America I realized more clearly than before that our future relations with India will end in disaster, unless they are to have a sound ethical basis. Fundamentally, Mr Gandhi is right: morals and politics are one.

In August 1931 I sailed on board the *Mooltan* with the majority of Indian delegates to the second Round Table Conference. I was leaving India, it seemed, for good. But at least I was to come into still closer contact with Mr Gandhi while he was in London. It was his behaviour in London that revealed to me the tragic qualities of his life. Mr Gandhi is a man of no great scholarship, and his early years in London were not distinguished. He went to South Africa because—to put it bluntly—he could not find a suitable job in his own country. South Africa gave him his opportunity; for he was able in the end to convince three continents that Indian residents in a foreign land deserved the rights of citizenship. He fashioned for the world the new instrument of non-violence, of *Satyagraha*; and within a few months the world that professed to admire the instrument of *Satyagraha* was at war. Mr Gandhi reached London the day after war was declared. Mr Gandhi, apostle of non-violence, was soon championing the British cause with the whole-hearted loyalty that he had once championed her cause during the Boer War. A keener mind would have perceived that, by supporting any of the combatants during the Great War, the author of *Satyagraha* was committing himself to a logical absurdity; but whereas an Englishman might base his pacifism on reason, Mr Gandhi bases it on feeling and the emotions.

After the War, India is disillusioned and bitter. She has fought for the freedom of nations; she has fought for civilization; she has fought "the war to end war." Her reward has been the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms; in other words, reforms on the instalment plan. She looks for a leader, and she imagines she has found him in the apostle of non-violence, whom hitherto she has scarcely known, and who has spent the greater part of his life in South Africa. This disciple of Ruskin and Tolstoy, this

sincere and unscholarly social reformer, was called to lead a great national party through crises that his mind failed frequently to comprehend. He was not big enough, I humbly submit, for this great calling. But then who was?

While he suffers imprisonment, the leadership of the party slips from him. C. R. Das, the great Bengali, dies. There is no one to take his place, and undeniably no one knows better than Mr Gandhi how to capture the imagination of the people. So he comes once more to power. Seldom, indeed, has the constructive work of the Congress been his own. Able men vied with each other for the Mahatma's ear. He is like a Pope surrounded by ambitious Cardinals who have twice his knowledge and diplomacy. In time younger men succeed to the purple. Where old Cardinals found the Pontiff pliable, younger Cardinals are finding him obstinate. Mr Gandhi was loath to leave Bombay for London and the Round Table Conference, because he knew that his own Working Committee was ready to desert him. The Working Committee listened to the voices of the young. The young are impatient with the apostle of non-violence; they are even impatient with non-violence. They talk of the destruction of religion, of Communism and of a Peasants and Workers Republic. Yet there are many Englishmen in Bombay who will agree with me that the modern young man of India is physically, mentally and morally superior to the Indian of an older generation. Love of his country has given him a new discipline.

But with the slogans of irreligion, Communism and Republicanism Mr Gandhi will have nothing to do. He is at heart a Tory. And because he is at heart a Tory and because India is still fundamentally a conservative country, I have not disguised my belief that Lord Irwin was right in regarding Mr Gandhi as the most important man in

India, and that both Lord Willingdon and the British Government have been wrong in regarding him merely as the head of one of the numerous parties of India. Whatever faults and failings he may have, whenever he appears to dominate Congress he is a power to be reckoned with. The Government had a chance of negotiating with Mr Gandhi—and I am convinced that he came to London with peaceful intentions—while he was still not only a great figure, but a great influence. They might have made him their strongest ally. They chose to tread him down. I believe that he left London still prepared to wrestle with his Working Committee for the sake of peace. The Government of India would not allow him his opportunity. They would not give him time—in Disraeli's phrase—to educate his party; with the result that Englishmen suddenly found themselves committed to a dual policy of repression and reform. The people who thought Redmond an extremist forgot that there were men like Collins and De Valera to take his place. The people who think Gandhi an extremist are oblivious to the energy and directness of the Youth Movement in modern India. Those who called Mr Gandhi an extremist ten years ago might at least acknowledge that the three Round Table Conferences are securing for India reforms far more sweeping than those demanded by Mr Gandhi during the first Civil Disobedience movement.

But I must not digress. Mine is not primarily a political study. I am concerned first and foremost with the study of a man. If there is a strong personal bias in this book, I ask the reader for his forgiveness. I have not pretended to give very much material that is new. Those who want more material must turn to Mr Andrews and the autobiography. What I claim to give is a fresh interpretation. If Mr Gandhi is the biggest personality I have yet encountered, I cannot associate myself with the hysterical

admiration bestowed upon him by people who are in other ways sane and reasonable. Against certain of his doctrines I rebel with all my heart and with all my mind.

I detest his asceticism. It is not the asceticism of his masters, Ruskin and Tolstoy, strong men struggling to tame an ardent imagination; but the asceticism of a moralist who is not an artist. Mr Gandhi has destroyed more beauty than any man of our generation. When he ordered the public burning of all foreign cloth after the War he did not shrink from the fact that he was committing many priceless treasures to the flames. Dr Rabindranath Tagore protested, but in vain. The Mahatma imposed upon India the Gandhi cap, and the Gandhi cap is a hideous invention. Tribesmen and caste-men who wore their own variety of turban and *puggaree* for centuries have been urged to discard them for the Gandhi cap of coarse *khaddar*. One day they will discard the Gandhi cap with relief. Yet I suspect that they cannot return to their turban and *puggaree*. Some lovely heritage of ancient India will be lost for ever.

I detest Mr Gandhi's praise of poverty. I detest the poverty of India's peasants as much as I have detested the ostentation of her rulers. India is hopelessly poor, and she is becoming poorer. Her population increases at the rate of three millions a year. One has no right to teach the Indian peasant that poverty is of God; for it is not true. We have solved the problem of production; we must now solve the problem of distribution. And when I consider that problem I think not only of redemption for the men and women who walk sorrowfully along the Embankment in London or Riverside in New York; I think of the hundreds of millions of underfed Indian peasants. So long as their condition remains unchanged, it is only by a gross misuse of language that we can speak of over-production at all.

Finally, I detest Mr Gandhi's praise of suffering. It is a feminine and masochistic doctrine. We no more live in a world freed from suffering than we live in a world freed from evil. Suffering is something to avoid and overcome or, if it must come our way, to meet quietly and with dignity. Non-violence may involve suffering; but the suffering does not of itself justify non-violence.

While I was writing this study of Mr Gandhi the Oxford Union agreed to the motion that "this house will in no circumstance fight for King and Country." This motion —taken far more seriously in London than in Oxford— had at least the merit of thoroughness. Young men, born while the guns of Flanders boomed across the Straits of Dover, were, I fancy, nurtured on the belief that we have fought "the war to end war." There are some among them who argue that, since the next war will be fought not by generals at the heads of millions of combatants, but by chemists with a staff of highly trained assistants, capable of bringing the ultimate victory to their side within half-an-hour of the declaration of war, our Armies and Navies might as well disappear. It is not for me to express a view on the attitude of these young men. It is, however, a matter which concerns Mr Gandhi deeply, for he is acknowledged to be the great pacifist of our generation. As Mr Andrews admits, his weapon of *Satyagraha* has given us the moral equivalent for war which, according to William James, the world is seeking. Yet Mr Gandhi—a stretcher-bearer during the Boer War and a recruiting sergeant during the Great War—shirks even to-day the problem of India's defence.

It is odd; but the author of *Satyagraha* has not given the world its comprehensive philosophy of pacificism. He did not approach non-violence with his intellect. Neither did he approach poverty or suffering with his intellect.

CHAPTER ONE

Preparation

"If the Indians have become the pariahs of the Empire, it is retributive justice meted out to us by a just God. Should we Hindus not wash our blood-stained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs? Untouchability has degraded us, made us pariahs in South Africa, East Africa, Canada. So long as Hindus wilfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long *Swaraj* is impossible of attainment. India is guilty. England has done nothing blacker. The first duty is to protect the weak and helpless and never injure the feelings of any individual. We are no better than brutes until we have purged ourselves of the sins we have committed against our weaker brethren."

Mr Gandhi spoke these words at a conference of the depressed classes which took place at Ahmedabad, within view of his once celebrated Sabarmati *ashram*, during the hot weather of 1921. This speech—the best he has so far delivered—is famed chiefly for its reference to one of his earliest inhibitions. He had scarcely learned to speak his native Gujerati before he was told that on no account must he touch any of the children who played at the entrance to his father's compound. Their skin was darker than his; for their ancestors were living in India long before the great Aryan migrations began. They wore no *shikka*—the little tuft of hair by which the faithful are lifted up to heaven at their death. There was no sacred thread on their brown and naked chests. They were Untouchables. Their touch polluted and defiled. In Southern India even the passing of their shadow rendered the twice-born impure. The boy could not understand. He asked his mother to

The followers of Wesley, taught to believe that their reward was to be found in heaven, would not resist the callous ordinances of men who reaped dishonestly the benefits of the Industrial Revolution. We do not want to encourage a teaching—such as Mr Gandhi's—which is to lead men and women into the control of economic and social exploiters. When Mr Gandhi praises poverty, he is just as wrong as the reactionary who believes that peasants, since they seem to be content with their miserable condition, should be left alone.

I follow a difficult course. I shall be excommunicated alike by the Mahatma's *entourage*—who, I fear, do not always welcome criticism—and by the great men who resent the intrusion of Mr Gandhi with his wayward economics and his disconcerting adherence to Truth. This cannot be helped. I have discussed Mr Gandhi with many men in India. We have admired him and we have hated him; but each, according to his capacity, has tried to understand him. His career has baffled me constantly during the past seven years. Perhaps this is because life has baffled his career. Life conspires against men who would impose an unnatural order upon the world. Gandhi the ascetic, Gandhi the moralist and social reformer, Gandhi the politician set loose forces stronger than himself. He has not fashioned life according to his own pattern. No man can.

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But it mattered a great deal that Mr Giles should leave determined to praise the thoroughness of the school, and Mohandas, who was the son of the Prime Minister of Porbandar, had let his master down.

These two memories of childhood showed that Mohandas was impressionable, and first impressions were apt to count. It was natural, perhaps, that he should have asked questions about Christianity, since this is officially the religion of the English governing class. Unfortunately, his first acquaintance with this religion came when, as a very young boy, he heard all the gossip and scandal created by the conversion of a well-known Hindu to Christianity. As soon as the ex-Hindu was baptized, he ate beef and drank intoxicating liquor. He then discarded his *dhoti* for a pair of English trousers, and finally, as the mark of a complete Christian, he wore a hat. Years later, when Mohandas mentioned this conversion in public, an indignant denial came from an ex-missionary who worked in this part of India. It was, of course, an old wives' tale; but Mohandas, who has a weakness for old wives' tales, believed it, and so it passed for truth. After all, it is no more absurd to ask an Indian convert to wear a hat than it is to expect a small boy in Porbandar to spell " kettle."

Kathiawar, to which the state of Porbandar belongs, is a medieval and fantastic country. Tourists go to India to see the Taj Mahal by moonlight; Sir Edwin Lutyens' city of New Delhi when the Viceroy is in residence; and the Himalayas when the little season at Darjeeling is in full swing. They never go to Kathiawar unless they are engaged upon some scholarly and obscure pursuit or have become eccentrics who do not mind large crowds of men and women following white-skinned strangers until they have passed beyond the boundaries of the village. Even to the

explain. He asked his nurse. They could not give a reason. They merely emphasized the fact that the touch of the Untouchables defiled. Their touch was worse, they declared, than the touch of a Mohammedan, and the ablutions that must follow an accidental touch were long and arduous.

As the years proceeded, terror turned to pity, abhorrence to temptation. One day he touched an Untouchable, and then neglected to submit to the prescribed ablutions. Again and again he touched the Untouchables. He committed the deadly sin, and was glorying in the commission. He reached the age of twelve, and made a solemn vow that he would work for the redemption of the Untouchables. His life's vocation had come early.

Untouchability was not the only mystery that presented itself to the uncomprehending mind of Mohandas Gandhi. There came a day when his schoolmaster showed unusual nervousness. Mr Giles, Inspector of Schools, had arrived in Porbandar. His methods were thorough, and the fear he imposed on schoolmasters could be transmitted to their pupils; for he was a member of the great governing class, and even to-day English visitors to Porbandar are few. His eyes rested upon Mohandas.

" Spell kettle," he commanded.

Mohandas Gandhi tried to spell the word. He failed.

" Spell kettle."

The agitated schoolmaster made desperate signs. " Kettle " was written distinctly on another boy's slate. Mohandas Gandhi could see the word plainly if only he would look. The schoolmaster kicked his pupil lightly. Even this hint he was too stupid to understand. " Kettle " remained unspelt. Mr Giles left the room, and the schoolmaster comforted himself by lecturing Mohandas. The question of cheating did not, of course, arise. The right spelling of " kettle " is of no concern to anyone in Porbandar.

Government of India, Kathiawar has been something alien. In Queen Victoria's reign, more than one Viceroy seized eagerly upon excuses for assimilating small and tiresome States. Lord Dalhousie developed the " doctrine of lapse," and with the ultimate consent of Whitehall seized Satara because the Raja had died without an heir. The States of Kathiawar, however, were left under the benign and undoubtedly remote supervision of the Governor of Bombay, and it was not until late in the century that any desire to improve the efficiency of Kathiawar became manifest.

To this day Kathiawar is a mosaic of little States. Maharajahs, Ranas, Nawabs and Thakore Sahibs vie with each other in maintaining their princely dignity. Their diminutive courts are sometimes crowded with officials, and they have entangled themselves in so many dynastic alliances that the government of Kathiawar is now almost a family affair. Each Prince in Kathiawar has behind him generations of experience in autocratic rule. He relies upon the advice of his Prime Minister, whom he calls his Dewan. Tiresome requests are always referred to his Prime Minister, and when things go wrong it is the Prime Minister who takes the blame. The relations between the ruler and his Prime Minister are very personal: so are the relations between the ruler and his subjects. A Prime Minister and a private secretary usually exhaust the limits of the ruler's immediate bureaucracy. Now and then—even in the comparatively leisurely years of the last century—political officers and other officials made a tour of the States as a reminder that the British Crown was still paramount. The Princes betrayed anxiety and corresponded with each other afresh. They inspected their palaces to make sure that the horsehair sofas, the deal and mahogany armchairs, the signed photographs of Queen Victoria and long since

forgotten Governors of Bombay, and the earthenware vases from Birmingham were all in their proper places. Somehow or other a vast army of servants managed to shake the palace into the tidiness and sobriety of a South Kensington boarding-house, and the Prime Minister arrived early at his office, so that he might create the impression that affairs of State were working him to death. Fortunately, the visits of the Political Officer were rare, and when his back was turned, an overwrought Prince would order a red-hot curry and the Prime Minister comfort himself with a fresh supply of betel-nut. Life once more regained its ease and leisure, and there was little beyond the distant and spasmodic rumbling of agitation in British India to impair the divine right of the Prince or the natural efficiency of the Prime Minister. Kathiawar presents the same scene to-day, except that a few of the Princes have purchased Rolls-Royce cars, which ply along the very few roads and lanes that Kathiawar provides. And to-day there are rather more Princes, Prime Ministers and private secretaries who cultivate a delicate Oxford accent and chew their betel-nut, if at all, with the utmost secrecy.

The statecraft of Kathiawar is homely and rather vulnerable. The princely houses have many younger sons. Some of them would make excellent ministers of State, but the Princes know whom they should employ near the throne. Younger sons and a discontented nobility are dangerous. They should be left to play polo. The Indian States contain one miniature Versailles after another. The Prince appeals over the heads of his nobility to men who owe everything to their talents. Just as Louis the Fourteenth preferred the employment of Colbert to the employment of a Marquis, so, more often than not, the Princes of Kathiawar recruited their officers from families other than their own. It so happened that, in the middle of the last

century, the Rana of Porbandar employed Ota Gandhi—a man without any family pretensions. Ota Gandhi was a Modh Bania of the Vaishnava caste. His immediate ancestors, like those of most other Modh Banias, were retail tradesmen. Above him in the social scale at Porbandar were many who belonged to the Brahman and Kshattrya castes. He was straightforward and honest, but he could be uncompromisingly blunt and obstinate, and there came a day when the Rana ordered Ota Gandhi to surrender the seals of office. Ota Gandhi at once left Porbandar for the neighbouring State of Junagadh. The Nawab of Junagadh did not hesitate to receive the disgraced Minister, who saluted him with the left hand. "The right hand," Ota Gandhi explained, "is reserved for Porbandar." Ota was an oddity, and he had twice married. He was the Mahatma's grandfather.

His son, Kaba, was both more pliable in his political allegiances and more uxorious. First of all, he succeeded his father as Prime Minister of Porbandar. Then he relinquished the post in favour of his brother, and became Prime Minister of Rajkot, which is the principal state of Kathiawar. Later on, he ceased to be Prime Minister of Rajkot and became Prime Minister of Vankaner—as though the British Prime Minister could leave Downing Street to-morrow with the comfortable assurance that there awaited him either the Premiership of New South Wales or the Presidency of the Dail Eireann. There was, indeed, an additional advantage; for when at last Kaba Gandhi returned to Porbandar, he took with him a pension from Rajkot.

Kaba Gandhi had been three times a widower before he married a very young girl called Putlibai. There was a serious discrepancy in their ages; but the antipathy of enlightened Hinduism to early marriage—or marriage

between ageing men and young girls—was not yet roused, and on 2nd October 1869, Putlibai became the mother of a boy, who received the names of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The Gandhis afforded a striking example of the joint Hindu family, for many lived under the same roof in the Prime Minister's house at Porbandar, and little Mohandas must have been well advanced in his boyhood before he could distinguish clearly between his brothers and sisters, his half-brothers and half-sisters, his uncles, aunts, step-uncles and step-aunts. But we have his own personal assurance that he used to be a good mathematician. The house in Porbandar still stands. The town of Porbandar is clean and pleasant. The waters of the harbour ripple in the sunlight and thick groves of palm-trees provide the town with abundant shade. Little Untouchable children still play beyond the compound of the house that was once the residence of the Prime Minister; though they are lucky if they ever find a child of Modh Bania parents who will dare to touch them. The birthplace has never become a place of pilgrimage; but then who among the European and American visitors to Bombay has ever paid a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Rudyard Kipling?

The Prime Minister, uxorious and pleasure-loving, was deeply attached to the ritual of the temple. He took his duties and responsibilities gaily, and indeed the excellent system by which, instead of going into opposition, he was able to exchange one Premiership for another was admirably calculated to soften the hardships of office. He was not scholarly, and he was not well versed in the literature of his religion. So long, however, as he could wander from one temple to another, he was content. Far deeper, more prone to fanaticism, was the religion of the young wife. Putlibai Gandhi had married almost without her knowledge, and certainly without her consent. She lived among

step-children almost as old as herself and, as these things are reckoned in Europe, she was unlettered. None the less, she had something like a religious genius. She was a natural ascetic who loved discipline almost for its own sake. She took strange vows. Sometimes she would vow to abstain from food until the sun came out. In the monsoon, when deep blankets of clouds swept over the coast of Gujerat, the sun would be completely obscured for days on end. Putlibai Gandhi would grow thin and haggard. Her children, observing this condition, often watched for some rift in the clouds; and if such a rift appeared and the sun was to be seen again, the children at once raised a cry for their mother. Often, however, the rift disappeared before Putlibai had time to answer the children's call. What did it matter? God had not intended her to break her fast that day. The wife of the Prime Minister would return to her household duties with a smile.

It was a matter almost of convention that when Mohandas had reached the age of thirteen—a year after his resolve to destroy the stigma of Untouchability—Kaba Gandhi should arrange a marriage. On three distinct occasions the Prime Minister had betrothed his son to a girl whom the intended bridegroom had never seen. But his betrothals were as short as his own marriages, and two of the betrothed girls had died. Marriages and funerals are costly features of Hindu life. The money a Hindu family is prepared to expend on each event is out of all proportion to its income. The chief item of expenditure is, of course, the dowry, which must be paid by the parents of the bride. It is a feature so unwelcome that usually an Indian is not congratulated upon the arrival of a daughter, and there is no doubt that the marriage conventions have been an incentive to female infanticide. None the less, a certain amount of the expense must be met by the parents of the bridegroom.

The Prime Minister of Porbandar was not the man to contract debts or to waste money on three wedding feasts when one was sufficient. He, therefore, arranged that the wedding of Mohandas should synchronize with the wedding of his elder brother and a cousin. Kaba Gandhi saved his money and restricted the occasion for elaborate merry-making in his model State of Porbandar. His descent from some successful retail tradesman had not been entirely useless.

Mohandas was, of course, delighted at the prospect of matrimony. It meant a holiday from school, presents and a little girl to be his constant playmate. Other schoolboys had married. Some may even have married twice. When at last the ceremonies were ended, Mohandas and the little girl, Kasturbai, were left alone. They were shy, though each had been coaxed beforehand. They needed time. Outside were the older people who knew perfectly well what the experiences of the two children would be. They did not object. The saintly Putlibai saw nothing wrong. It was all part of the established order of things. And so they were left to acquire carnal knowledge of each other at a time when English schoolboys were reading *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and advanced Victorian bishops were beginning to argue that candidates might safely be presented for confirmation at the early age of fifteen.

Within a few days of the marriage, Kaba Gandhi sent Mohandas back to school. Kathiawar at that time was undergoing one of its infrequent "waves of reform." Obedient to the new reform movement, the schoolmaster had introduced compulsory games, and it needed the personal intervention of a very conservative Prime Minister to rescue Mohandas from a typically Anglo-Saxon *fetish*. This did not prevent the schoolmaster from admonishing Mohandas Gandhi rather frequently, and on at least

one occasion he returned to his wife and the family bearing upon his body the marks of a possibly well-earned chastisement.

Mohandas knew all the arts of sex before he was fourteen years old. It hardly occurred to him that he should regard his young wife as something other than the instrument of his pleasure. It was not possible that his relations with her should incur the displeasure of the Prime Minister, still less of Putlibai. But even in India, where men mature and decay more rapidly than in the West, marriage comes before the sex-life is complete. The English adolescent first discovers friendship, and then grows more deeply conscious of the fact of womanhood. With Mohandas Gandhi marriage came long before he had grown to value the friendship of other youths. How it was that an older boy—once the companion of his brother—grew attached to Mohandas we shall never know. The older boy was magnificently built. He could run and jump with the grace that an athletic Indian alone possesses. Mohandas, enslaved in his pinched and awkward body, envied him. He wished to become as strong and as beautiful as his friend; and this, the friend assured him, was easy. He had only to eat meat.

Here, indeed, was foul and horrible sin. The Gandhis were not only Modh Banias; they were disciples of the Jains, and a Jain monk will frequently cover his mouth with muslin, so that no fly may enter and be accidentally swallowed. Mohandas shrank from the temptation. The older boy persisted. Meat-eating, he pointed out, was all part of the "wave of reform." Even Mohandas's older brother was eating meat on the sly. For long Mohandas resisted. It mattered not at all that, like compulsory games, meat-eating had become part of the "wave of reform." He had successfully resisted the one reform. He would

now resist the other. Against his purpose, however, stood the strong, well-moulded arms of the meat-eating athlete. The strength of a lion he owed entirely to the eating of flesh. How would the English have conquered India if they had not been fiendish meat-eaters? How can the Indians expel them from the Motherland until they themselves have tasted flesh? The Herculean tempter was slowly subduing Mohandas to his will.

The Gandhi family grew anxious. Putlibai and the girl-wife begged Mohandas to end the friendship. But this he refused to do. He knew perfectly well that his friend was " wicked." He wanted, he said, to reform him. The reformation proceeded apace. Mohandas was seen less and less frequently in the Prime Minister's house. The desire to be free from the inhibitions of the Jains, to grow strong and graceful, to compete with success in the local Olympiad became at last irresistible—Mohandas tasted meat.

He was sick. He felt degraded and impure. When he went to bed that night he fancied that a live goat was bleating inside him. For the second time in life he had committed a grave sin. Unlike the touching of an Untouchable, the eating of meat was a sin that his conscience could not promptly condone. Yet for about a year Mohandas and his friend met clandestinely to eat meat. He increased neither in strength nor beauty. He was still afraid to sleep with his wife unless a candle was burning in the bedroom. He was never to be the stuff of which athletes are made. Moreover, it became increasingly difficult to conceal this dietary practice from his parents, and Mohandas seems to have had throughout his life a genuine horror of telling lies. Yet to have told the truth was quite impossible. It would have been easier for George Washington to confess to the destruction of an entire forest of cherry-trees than for Mohandas to confess to a Vaishnava family that he had

tasted meat. Besides, his own meat-eating and reforming brother would have been implicated. In the end he told his friend that he would never eat meat again until both his parents were dead. He has not eaten meat since.

This first frustration merely strengthened the athlete's desire to dominate the younger Mohandas, and one night he induced the boy-husband to visit a brothel. In Europe, when youths make their first visit to a brothel, they are often encountering the sex for the first time. Mohandas, on the contrary, had been satiated with sex. He knew perfectly well what to expect. His payments were made in advance. And yet, like thousands of other novices, he was overcome with shame. The immoral " earnings " were not " earned." There were other visits, but the result was always the same. It was not until the athlete attempted to persuade him that his wife had been unfaithful, that Mohandas brought the friendship to an end. There followed a brief friendship with a cousin. They shared a weakness for smoking. A Prime Minister who arranged for three family weddings at the same time was not likely to endow even his married children with a liberal allowance of pocket-money, and, in order to find the funds for their smoking, Mohandas and his cousin stole the savings of the Prime Minister's servants. On one occasion they decided to carry out a suicide pact. Life had nothing in store for them. They chose the setting for their suicide very carefully. They would die together in a temple. Mohandas's strong sense of humour may have saved him. Anyway, after swallowing one or two poisonous datura seeds, the two youths decided to swallow no more; and their semi-poisoning does not seem seriously to have affected their health.

Mohandas might have gone still further along the way of most flesh, if he had not been made suddenly to realize

that the ageing Prime Minister was now a very sick man. Word spread through Porbandar that Kaba Gandhi was about to die. The devoted brother, who once held the office of Prime Minister in his stead, rushed to the bedside and refused to be comforted. Hindus and Mohammedans from all parts of the State called to recommend their doctors. An English surgeon came all the way from Bombay, and insisted upon an immediate operation. But India is sometimes more sceptical of our surgery and our medicine than it is of our religion, and when the family physician argued that Kaba Gandhi was too old for an operation, Putlibai, her brother-in-law and her son promptly believed him. The " wave of reform " in Kathiawar was not so strong, after all.

Before long, all hope was lost. Mohandas seized eagerly upon an excuse to leave the schoolroom and became a constant attendant upon his father. Diet, medicine and nursing fascinated him. He knew now that he would become a doctor. The presence of death, however, does not destroy a man's lust. Many a devoted son, as he stood watching at the death-bed of his parent, has gazed at the sunlight without and longed to rush away. Life is more intense than death, and affection is seldom strong enough entirely to subdue the desire to be gone. Kasturbai, the girl-wife—perpetual instrument of passion—slept in an adjoining room. Late one night Mohandas slipped out of the sick-room, awoke his wife and embraced her. Scarcely had the long embrace ended when there came a summons. Kaba Gandhi was dead.

" If animal passion had not blinded me," wrote Mohandas many years later, " I should have been spared the torture of separation from my father during his last moments. I should have been massaging him. He would have died in my arms. But now it was my uncle who had been given

this honour." And then he continued to write of "this shame of my carnal desire, even at the critical hour of my father's death, which had demanded wakeful service. It is a blot I have never been able either to efface or to forget; and I have always thought that, although my devotion to my parents knew no bounds, so that I would have given up anything for it, yet it was weighed in the balance that hour and found unpardonably wanting, because my mind was in the grip of lust. I have therefore always regarded myself as a lustful, though a faithful, husband. It took me long to get free from these shackles, and I had to pass through many ordeals before I could find release."

It was a turning-point in his life. A few weeks later the baby arrived. It did not live for more than three or four days.

The ladies of Porbandar crowded round Putlibai to console her in her grief. The widowed mother of the Thakore Saheb came, as before, to seek spiritual counsel from so good a woman. Putlibai was neither lettered nor clever, but India is more impressed by goodness than by cleverness. God—the ladies of Porbandar assured Putlibai —would bless her children. Mercifully, terrestrial blessings were already assured; for when the rulers of Porbandar, Rajkot, Junagadh and Vankaner had already looked to the Gandhi family for the supply of their Prime Ministers, who could doubt that a Dewanship awaited Mohandas Gandhi? All he had to do was to pass a few examinations.

Examinations were not, however, the boy's strong point. Mr Giles, the Inspector of Schools, was not the only pedagogue who had gone away disappointed. When schooldays in Porbandar had ended ingloriously, Mohandas was sent to a college in Bhavnagar, which is another of the Kathiawar States. Here again there was no distinguished record, and the family that had supplied so many Prime Ministers for

Kathiawar began to ask how it would be possible to make Mohandas Prime Minister of Porbandar. In despair, they sought the advice of Mavji Dave, a wise old Brahman, who was paying the family a visit. He seems to have told the Gandhis quite bluntly that there was no hope for Mohandas at his present rate of progress. He might in course of time become a bachelor of arts. He might eventually become a *vakil*. But, even in those days, India was beginning to feel the glut of graduates. Why not. Mavji Dave argued, send Mohandas to England? It was daring but excellent advice. The anglicized Indian gains an honorific prestige. He will obtain posts denied to abler men who adhere more stubbornly to the traditions and conventions of their own country. It is not bad policy, perhaps, to send the fool of the family to England. From his own son's career, the cynical Brahman added, he knew that it was quite easy to become a barrister in England.

Those words were like thunder. In the late eighties fewer Indians than old Mavji Dave imagined were prepared to cross the Arabian Sea, and so risk the loss of caste. To Putlibai the advice was almost blasphemous. Young men in England, she had heard, were morally lost. They drank intoxicating liquor. They even smoked cigars. It was not for the purpose of rearing anglicized sons that she used to fast until the sun came out. But if this unlettered and ascetic widow could have contended successfully against the Brahman, her protests to her son were unavailing. A strain of inflexible obstinacy had at last asserted itself. No sooner had Mohandas heard Mavji Dave's advice than he resolved there and then to go to England. It mattered not at all that he was married and that he was now a father. Whatever moral objections his mother might make, they must be brushed aside. If Putlibai feared that he would eat meat, drink intoxicating liquor and smoke cigars, Mohandas

would take a vow to do none of these things. He even brought a Jain monk to the late Prime Minister's house. The Jain monk was ready to administer the oath, and in his presence the boy solemnly vowed to live a celibate life in England, and to abstain from all wine, meat and smoking. Putlibai could plead no longer. It was not for her to question the will of God.

Other difficulties presented themselves. Word passed from one Modh Bania to another that a member of their caste was about to leave Kathiawar for England. Hitherto few—if any—Modh Banias had so dared to bring disgrace upon their caste. Nothing was done until Mohandas had actually left Kathiawar; but soon after he reached Bombay he was summoned to a meeting of the caste. The leaders warned him that unless he abandoned his journey to England he would be solemnly excommunicated. The boy's full-grown obstinacy came to his aid. He defied a threat that would have driven other young members of his caste to despair. Nothing would intimidate him; and so the solemn excommunication came into effect, and to this day there are many Modh Banias who argue that Mohandas Gandhi is still an excommunicated person.

Then at last the voyage begins. One more Indian boy starts his quest into the unknown. He is by nature truthful and stubborn. His religion, so far as it developed, is practical rather than mystical. He is married to a girl whom he did not choose, and who was never intended to be his intellectual companion. It does not occur to him that in marriage a woman has rights, and that it was, perhaps, easier for him to take a vow of celibacy than for her to wait three years for the return of her young lord. Marriage itself has been something of a disappointment. Friendships have failed him; he will never again seek the intimacy of men. Despite constant acquaintance with the married

state, he is vowed to celibacy. In a meat-eating, wine-drinking, smoke-consuming country he will be vowed to an abstinence far rarer than it is to-day. He is not yet twenty, though he knows far more of life than English youths of the same age. Homesickness overwhelms him. Perhaps, as the boat sails out of Bombay harbour, his eye lights upon the distant coast of Salsette; but even that lovely country is far removed from the golden sands of Kathiawar, where often the grief-stricken Putlibai will be fasting until the sun comes out. Behind him are the penalties and the obloquy of excommunication. Such are the conditions that may make a man a saint. They are also conditions likely to make him a rake.

CHAPTER TWO

The Englishman's Home

A FAR from comely young Indian landed at Southampton on a dreary Sunday afternoon late in September 1887. All the shops were shut. A septuagenarian might have consented to drive in a carriage; an invalid might have dared to be propelled behind a tricycle. Otherwise, soberly dressed pedestrians filled the streets, and chapel deacons were scarcely to be distinguished from churchwardens as they ambled sedately in their frock-coats and black silk hats. It was in order to live among people such as these that Mohandas had taken his vow not to eat meat or to drink wine or to commit adultery. He was seeing England for the first time, and England was in a strictly Sabbatarian frame of mind.

Mohandas, alas, offended deeply against the proprieties. While the boat was sailing up the Solent he had exchanged a decent black suit for a suit made entirely of white flannel. He had dressed himself like a *sahib* from Bombay; and *sahibs* from Bombay were not likely to be appreciated by the devout of Southampton. Was it not a fact that the Bombay *sahibs* hunted the jackal on a Sunday? In the late eighties an Indian of any description was something of a rarity in Southampton; but an Indian clad entirely in white was making his pagan origin far too ostentatious. Mohandas, homesick and sensitive, stood abashed, "and felt how awful goodness is." He returned to his hotel and tried to change his clothes again, and as his boxes were not yet accessible he sat down and waited for the arrival of an Indian doctor, a friend of the family, who was now to be his sole link with Kathiawar. The doctor, when he

eventually arrived, was kindness itself, until Mohandas, looking upon his visitor's silk hat as a toy, brushed its fur the wrong way. That Sunday afternoon Mohandas learned that clothes were overwhelmingly important.

He reached London. He might have been forgiven if he had gone first of all to see the Tower, the Zoo, or Madame Tussaud's, in whose exhibition he was one day to hold an honoured position. Instead, he went straight to the Army and Navy Stores, where he purchased a suit of clothes. The expenditure of nineteen shillings gave him the coveted distinction of a black silk hat, and as soon as he was attired in his new suit, and his black silk hat, he walked to Bond Street, where the then extravagant sum of ten pounds could purchase him an evening dress-suit. Even now he was not sartorially correct. He therefore sent an urgent message to his brother in Porbandar to forward him a double watch-chain of gold. A little observation soon taught him the fundamental immorality of a made-up tie. Until recently, he had not so much as seen a tie. Having bought the right sort of tie, he sat down before a mirror and proceeded to work out the puzzle. Laborious practice eventually enabled him to devote no more than ten minutes a day to the tasks of tying his tie and brushing his hair. The hair remained an embarrassment to the end of his stay in London; for it was coarse and tough, and every time Mohandas put his nineteen-shilling top-hat on his head a tuft of black hair would fall over his brow. The lot of a dandy is not a happy one.

It does not suffice merely to be well-dressed. Other qualities go to the making of an English gentleman. Mohandas determined to acquire all these qualities. There were difficulties from the start. Mohandas knew nothing of Western music. Like most Indians who set out to be English gentlemen, he could make nothing of our brazen

cacophony, and London—in the year of the Queen's Jubilee—was listening hard to Wagner. Her concert audiences would have had nothing but contempt for the *sita*, the *been* and the *tom-tom* that for centuries past have lightened the long evenings in the villages of Kathiawar. Moreover, an English gentleman must know how to dance. Mohandas, therefore, spent three pounds in advance for a set of dancing lessons. The music, however, bewildered him. It was impossible to follow the piano and thus impossible to keep time. He would have to acquire an ear for Western music. The potential Prime Minister of Porbandar resolved—perhaps half-heartedly—to buy a violin and to take violin lessons. He spent several more pounds for a violin and for fees to a violin teacher. Then he realized that even more important than an ear for Western music or the ability to waltz in a Bayswater drawing-room was a correct pronunciation of English, and accordingly he bought a book called Bell's *Standard Elocutionist*.

Bell's standard work proved to be exceedingly dull—duller even than learning to waltz or to play a simplified violin version of the *Moonlight Sonata*. It was more than Mohandas could bear, and thus he came to the startling conclusion that the status of an English gentleman could be purchased at too high a price. He wrote to the dancing master and the teacher of elocution to explain why he would trouble neither of them again. He might well have written in the same strain to the teacher of the violin. But the son of Kaba Gandhi was in no mood to dispose of his violin without some return in cash; and one day an Indian, clad in a silk hat and frock-coat, with a violin-case under his arm and a tuft of black hair threatening to fall over his forehead, was seen walking in the direction of a violin-teacher's rooms. He was calling to make a personal explanation. The teacher professed to sympathize completely with

his ideals, and offered at once to sell the violin. She seems to have been a nice woman, and, without a doubt, she was musical.

An Indian without his violin-case walked back to his rooms. He was more than glad to be rid of the burdens of music, dancing and elocution, though no one has yet explained why Mohandas is able to speak English with an accent that is unmistakably Oxonian. He had made his great renunciation. Yet it was not the renunciation by John Henry Newman when he forgot his violin for ever. Still less was it the renunciation made by Arthur Wellesley when, realizing that devotion to music might interfere with his military career, he broke his violin over his knee. Newman was an artist in prose, and Wellesley an artist in action. Mohandas is not an artist at all.

There are things besides music, dancing and elocution that go to the making of an English gentleman. Mohandas could not ignore his vows. He had made those vows to satisfy a mother whom a census officer would have promptly called "illiterate." Abstention from meat was proving a severe barrier to social intercourse. There was, of course, no truth in the story that a Kathiawari convert to Christianity had been compelled to eat beef and drink intoxicating liquor, though in actual practice English Churchmen seldom divorced the sermon from their midday dinner of beef and Yorkshire pudding. Forty years ago vegetarianism was still the *fetish* of cranks, who might dine with each other, but could scarcely be expected to dine in a respectable and Christian household.

Moreover, there was nothing scientific—or even pseudo-scientific—about Mohandas's abstention. He did not believe that meat-eating was wrong. He fully intended to eat meat again after his mother's death. He would even do all in his power to make India a meat-eating country. A solitary

vow stood between him and good English beef. Friends begged him to forsake a vow made before an unlettered mother. Landladies hinted that such a faddist was more trouble than he was worth as a lodger. Mohandas had half-starved himself, and he was encountering for the first time the rigours of an English winter. But persuasion was useless.

He ate what he could from the meals that were provided. He would leave the meat and eat the potatoes, cabbage and dish-water soup. When he felt cold and famished, he took long walks all over London. It was during one of these walks that he discovered a vegetarian restaurant. Near the door a vendor was selling copies of Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism*. Mohandas thanked God for the discovery—any sceptic will agree that it was providential—bought a copy of the *Plea for Vegetarianism* and entered the restaurant. He had his first big meal since his arrival in England.

Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism* he read from cover to cover. It made him an ardent convert to vegetarianism. The dreams of winning India to meat-eating vanished in a night. Mr Salt, for all we know, was no more effective in his advocacy of vegetarianism than was Mr Bell in his advocacy of correct English pronunciation. But early in life Mohandas had desired to subject his intellect to his will. His intellect, he knew only too well, had mocked the vows he made before his mother. But he would sooner surrender his intellect than his will. He seized eagerly upon all opportunities to make his intellect obedient to his will. Few people could have offered William James a more instructive example of the will to believe.

Other books followed the *Plea for Vegetarianism*. Almost all were concerned with the problem of the simple life and not one of them has survived the scrutiny of later

generations. Beyond Mohandas and his little circle of ideas were men and women who danced and sang, attended concerts and declaimed in the florid style of the early nineties. None of them ever came to trouble Mohandas. He exchanged a set of two rooms for a single room, cooked his own food, drank large quantities of cocoa and travelled on foot to the Inner Temple, where he ate those portions of the dinner that gave no offence to his conscience. Jostling him in the eager crowds of Fleet Street were the brilliant contemporaries of Aubrey Beardsley and Oscar Wilde. They trod the primrose path and, so doing, provided yet other examples of the will to believe. There is nothing to show that Mohandas was even aware of their existence.

It was inevitable that the new vegetarian should preach to the converted. No doubt in the Farringdon Street restaurant Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism* was frequently discussed. Mohandas went one day to Manchester, where he insisted upon staying in a vegetarian boarding-house. It so happened that one of the residents was as keen to make Christians as he was to make vegetarians, and the arrival of a Hindu gave him an admirable opportunity. He brushed aside the story of the Kathiawari convert who had meat and drink as the outward and visible sign of his conversion. Was he not himself a man capable of the miracle of being both a Christian and a vegetarian? He insisted that Mohandas should read the Bible, and in the end Mohandas promised that this should be done. He started from the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. It was entertaining enough; but the interest soon flagged. Mohandas nearly came to grief over the Book of Numbers. Even Bell's *Standard Elocutionist* was capable of brighter passages. Still he plodded on.

Mohandas managed to read the last chapter of the exhortations of the prophet Malachi. He then turned

methodically to the first chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. The Bible was beginning to be an entertainment once more. Very soon the plodder reached the Sermon on the Mount. And then his imagination caught fire. The ethics of the Sermon more than justified his own craving for a simple life. Here at last was inspired writing in the heart of the Christian Scriptures—two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff, and yet worth the search of a lifetime.

Yet of the truth of Christianity Mohandas was not convinced. Young Englishmen have written effusive letters to their friends after reading for the first time the opening sentence of *Le Contrat Social* : " Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." But they have seldom for long retained the belief that Rousseau knew how to solve the problems of his age. Mohandas, it seemed, retained the same sceptical attitude to Christianity. He could neither amend nor supplement the Sermon on the Mount; but he saw no reason why the Preacher should be invested with divinity. It was enough that he should be crowned with his own excellent humanity.

This scepticism naturally disappointed the vegetarian. Like Cromwell, he would not have believed it possible that a man should read the Christian Scriptures and remain unconvinced. Yet here was a man who read the Bible from cover to cover—the Book of Numbers and the Chronicles included—and he was still a heathen.

It was bad enough that Mohandas was so little tempted to become a Christian. Still more serious was his spiritual flirtation with the influences definitely hostile to Christianity. He met Mrs Annie Besant when she was at the height of her fame and beauty. No longer, it is true, was she the co-worker of Bradlaugh, and she had long since deserted atheism for theism. Bradlaugh, however, had

lived so long in the public eye that he was fast becoming respectable. Even William Ewart Gladstone had taken to listening intently to his speeches in the House of Commons. Mrs Besant went further than a respectable atheism; she had become a Theosophist, and she was spreading the fame of Madame Blavatsky throughout London, thus rousing a fury among the unsympathetic that even Mary Baker Eddy could scarcely have surpassed. All manner of people were finding their way to the Blavatsky Lodge, and among them came Mohandas Gandhi. Mrs Besant's efforts to convert him were not successful, and they were probably not very strenuous. Mohandas was not learned, clever or artistic. He could never have made a Krishnamurti, and when he declared that he did not want to join any particular religious group, Mrs Besant cheerfully left him alone. It was not for her to foretell the events that still lay in the womb of time.

Theosophists have this advantage over most other religious people in England—that they are aware of the fundamental truths which justify all the great religions of the world. They have been prepared in their fashion to learn all that Hinduism can teach them. Two brothers —both of them Theosophists—were making no great departure from their traditions, therefore, when they asked Mohandas to instruct them in the *Gita*, which they had been reading in Sir Edwin Arnold's monumental translation. With shame the truthful boy had to confess that he had never read the *Gita*; but he undertook to read it at once with the two brothers. It was better, he found, than the Hebrew and Christian Testaments. It was more profound and more beautiful. He was being instructed in London in his own religious literature through the medium of English—a strange training for Mahatma-dom.

Associated with an ardent desire for greater simplicity

in life was a profound reverence for courage and sincerity in others, and it was only to be expected that he should be among the mourners at Bradlaugh's funeral in Brookwood cemetery. He tells us that almost every other Indian in London was present at the funeral. So also were a large number of Anglican clergymen. The clergy of that generation showed an unstinted admiration of courageous utterance. Huxley, among other agnostics of his day, had a marked weakness for the friendship of clergymen. When Oscar Wilde waited desperately for the sureties that the police demanded, help came from a clergyman whom he did not know. The clergyman was proud to come forward because, he said, Wilde had once shown him beauty "as from a high hill." It was a clergyman of a later and different generation who, from the pulpit of Canterbury Cathedral, denounced the Vicar of Bonchurch for giving Christian burial to Algernon Swinburne.

It cannot be said that the Anglican mourners altogether escaped the gibes of Bradlaugh's atheistic associates. The dead man's pugilism somehow infested his mourners, and Mohandas witnessed the unhappy spectacle of charming old clergymen facing questions that wise men cannot answer. It made him more determined than ever before to cultivate the friendship of men who do not fear unpopular or difficult views, and it so happened that one of the first of these men that he encountered was a fellow-countryman, Narayan Hemchandra. Narayan Hemchandra knew not a word of English. His trousers—to judge from subsequent accounts—bore a close resemblance to the trousers worn some twenty years ago by the "British Workman" at Oxford. He wore no tie or collar. He was very short and his beard was long. In every way he was a foil to the well-groomed, top-hatted, black-coated Mohandas, who professed a faith in simplicity. Together

Narayan Hemchandra and Mohandas sought out the men and women they admired and, when John Burns and Cardinal Manning between them were settling the dockers' strike, they discussed the possibility of calling upon the Cardinal. Mohandas admitted that he had once read a tribute from Disraeli to the Cardinal's simplicity.

"Then I must see the sage," said Narayan Hemchandra.

Mohandas was still uncertain. Hemchandra commenced a conspiracy. He would call himself an author and take Mohandas with him as his interpreter. In the end Mohandas wrote a letter and waited dubiously for the Cardinal's reply. Young men—of whom Mr Hilaire Belloc is probably the last conspicuous example—used to make a practice of seeking spiritual advice from the Cardinal. The Cardinal saw a large number of people almost every day of his life. Those who knew him would not have doubted for one moment his willingness to grant an interview to two unknown Indians, and in due course a card fixing the appointment arrived.

The day of the interview with the Cardinal was signalled by special preparations before the mirror. The tie was to be arranged and the awkward hair brushed with special care. The attire was to be faultless. Needless to say, Narayan Hemchandra made not the slightest alteration in his appearance. "Great men," he explained, "never look at a person's exterior." So Mohandas in a silk hat and Narayan Hemchandra in a tasselled woollen cap walked together through the streets to the Archbishop's house. In came the Cardinal in robes that neither Mohandas nor Narayan Hemchandra could have described. But "all dress is fancy dress," and this is not the place in which to discuss the philosophy of clothes. Narayan Hemchandra made a brief speech in Gujerati, in which he solemnly declared that the Cardinal was a sage. Mohandas translated the speech for the benefit

of the Cardinal. The Cardinal was glad that they had come; he hoped that their stay in London would agree with them; he gave them God's blessing and at once dismissed them. The name of Gandhi never once appears in the published literature of the Cardinal; but no doubt Narayan Hemchandra was right when he said that Manning would not even see their exteriors.

Narayan Hemchandra's disregard for clothes grew more absolute than before. One day he arrived at Mohandas's lodgings in a *dhoti*—the long piece of cloth which in most parts of India still does duty for a pair of trousers. Children in the streets shrieked their delight. Narayan Hemchandra was scarcely less delighted himself ; for he knew that he had at last shocked the conventionally-dressed Mohandas, who needed to be reminded that a top-hat, a frock-coat and a double chain of gold were not more important than music, dancing and elocution. Later on, Narayan Hemchandra went to the United States, where he was prosecuted for being indecently dressed.

Mrs Besant and Cardinal Manning, though the outstanding figures who crossed young Gandhi's path during his stay in London, failed almost completely to influence him. Influence came instead from a conservative and now forgotten gentleman called Mr Frederick Pincutt, who cultivated the acquaintance of Indian students. It troubled him that Mohandas should be reading so little during his stay in England. He had not even read Kaye and Malleson on the *History of the Indian Mutiny*, which he was urged to procure at once. He was also to read one or two books on human nature. In similar fashion Sir Walter Scott once counselled Lord Byron : " My son, get thee knowledge, and with knowledge get thee also understanding."

The *History of the Indian Mutiny* can never have been the best introduction to a knowledge of India, and fortun-

ately Mohandas did not take this particular piece of advice too seriously. It was not, like Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism*, a book to be read from cover to cover. Moreover, it was Mohandas's first duty to read law, and this he was doing conscientiously. He passed his examinations, and in due course he was called to the Bar. Generous critics declare that preparation for the Bar makes general reading impossible, and there are certainly many lawyers who would eagerly refute old Mavji Dave's assertion that it is quite easy to become a barrister in England.

Mohandas was now to leave London. His qualifications to become Prime Minister of Porbandar were practically complete. Six thousand miles away a devoted brother—donor of the double watch-chain of gold—was replenishing the household crockery. He did not want the anglicized Mohandas to be ashamed of his home.

CHAPTER THREE

Contact with the World

THOUGH Mohandas Gandhi was now a fully fledged barrister of the Inner Temple, and would soon be the envy of other Kathiawari youths to whom the privilege of an English training had been denied, the Prime Ministership of Porbandar became more elusive than before. The Government had recently made one of its rare intrusions into the affairs of Kathiawar ; it deprived the Rana of Porbandar of most of his powers and then placed his little State under commission. The new administrator was made responsible to the Political Agent, who had his headquarters at Rajkot, and, as a concession to Kathiawari opinion, the Government had taken care that the new administrator should be an Indian. The Government remains as polite as it can be to disgraced Princes or to Princes momentarily out of favour. It was not likely, therefore, that the Political Agent would have attached any personal blame to the Rana for the maladministration of his State. Instead, he blamed the Rana's secretary for having given wrong advice ; and it so happened that the Rana's secretary had been Gandhi's elder brother, the one who had given him his double watch-chain of gold.

The *Assam* braved the angriest monsoon weather in the Arabian Sea, as she carried the new barrister among her passengers. Meanwhile, the Rana's ex-secretary set out for Bombay with a heavy heart. He had to explain the sudden reversal of the family's fortunes. It was no longer possible to transfer political loyalties from one State to another, as Ota and Kaba Gandhi had done, because the English Political Agent at Rajkot was now the watch-dog

for the whole of Kathiawar, and he was not fond of Mohandas's brother. Nor could favours be expected from the new Indian administrator in Porbandar, for his arrogance seems to have exceeded the arrogance of any *sahib*. If the Kathiawari Princes followed the Bourbon policy of recruiting their Ministers from the middle classes, nothing save peculation and dishonesty could prevent those Ministers from returning to the state of society to which by birth they belonged, once they had fallen from the Dewanship ; and at no time could the Gandhis have considered themselves a landed family. Gandhi's brother believed himself to be merely a scapegoat, and it was not fair that, as a scapegoat, he should incur the wrath of a distant and unapproachable Political Agent in Rajkot, to say nothing of the contempt of the new administrator in Porbandar, to whom the long records of Ota and Kaba Gandhi were as nothing. An anglicized brother, the ex-secretary decided, must speak reassuringly to the Agent on his behalf.

There was other news to break. Putlibai had died. Her devotions and her penitential fasts may have worn her down. She was probably not much more than forty at her death. The brother had no wish to bring this deep grief upon Mohandas while he was in an alien land. Once he had reached Bombay the news could be withheld no longer.

A curious detachment comes to those who have lived away from their own country for more than three years. It is the tourist and the student who stays in Paris no longer than six months at a time from whom the white cliffs of Dover exact their patriotic tears. From the returning *nabob* they evoke a feeling of fear. A chill and dampness about our island spoil in advance whatever welcome awaits him. Even so, India is scarcely more kind to her sons who

return from exile. There is a spiritual excommunication that outlives the ordinances of the caste. The returned Indian sees in Bombay buildings that almost duplicate the Law Courts and the Prudential Building. He is in Sir Gilbert Scott's City-by-the-Sea. There are wide roads lined with English shops, and the traffic is controlled with the same assurance that it is in London. Yet, if ever the returned Indian learned to feel at home in London, he knows that he will always be something of a stranger in Bombay. He is anglicized, but he can form no part of the hectic and severely circumscribed European life. In Bombay he is not an Indian, but a Parsee, a Mohammedan, or a Hindu of a particular caste. The fact that he may be an agnostic or an atheist makes no difference to his status or to the particular prejudices he is expected to hold.

It was scarcely a joyous moment, therefore, when Mohandas stepped ashore to greet his brother. He was still dressed in English clothes, though he had mercifully exchanged his top-hat for a turban. Around him coolies shouted and moaned. They were carrying burdens their wretched physiques should never bear. In the streets, as the traveller makes his way from the harbour to the Fort, is the familiar panorama of Indian life—colour intermingled with indescribable filth, leprous and syphilitic men and women begging alms, Untouchables walking in fear of the twice-born. While he strolled through the streets of Southampton on a dreary Sunday afternoon, a white-clad Gandhi might claim justly that the world of sober Sabbatarians had little to do with his own ; but in the streets of Bombay there was no escape from the fact that these men and women were his own flesh and blood. They were ignorant—ignorant of the most elemental laws of health and decency—and ignorance is always ugly. The heart of the reformer was touched.

It was necessary to allow Mohandas to recover from his grief. None the less, an anxious brother was impatient to remind him that he was even now an outcast. His excommunication by the Modh Banias was still in force. Mohandas must submit to the ritual of purgation, and this the barrister of the Inner Temple was extremely reluctant to do. Only because he had come to love his brother did he consent to travel up the Ghats to Nasik, there to wash in the sacred waters of the Godaveri.

Nasik is, next to Benares, the most sacred city in India. Many temples touch the Godaveri, which in the middle of the monsoon rushes through the city like an angry flood. Twelve miles away, and more than three thousand feet above sea-level, are the springs from which the Godaveri flows. Day and night unwashed and unshaven *sadhus* guard those springs. Below them are the lovely temples of Trimbak. It is a citadel of Brahmanism, a paradise for the twice-born. Ota Gandhi—less austere and probably more æsthetic than his son—would have loved to wander from one of these temples to the other. So sacred have the waters of the Godaveri become that one may find devout people who believe them to be actually the waters of the Ganges. A great subterranean river, so we are told, links the Ganges with the Godaveri. As it flows down from Trimbak to Nasik, the river presents a peaceful and untrammelled spectacle. *Sahibs* roam near its banks in search of panther, and even on occasion tiger. Their shots echo from one jungle village to another. It is the challenge of another civilization. In Hindustan, man strives to live in peace with the wild animals that shelter from his glance during the day. Outside many of those mud-huts that border the sacred Godaveri a traveller will discover a bowl of milk. Some peasant has placed it there to appease the venomous cobra.

But as soon as the Godaveri reaches Nasik the scene changes abruptly. Blue waters become yellow and brown. The sewage of more than a hundred thousand inhabitants flows into the river, which the traveller can smell more than a quarter of a mile away. Yet it is here, where the waters have become defiled and nauseous, that Hindus seek their purgation. They come from all parts of Western India ; and as they stand naked before the muddy torrent only the *shikka* and the sacred thread distinguish the twice-born from the low-born. There is ecstasy upon all their faces. They hurl themselves into the waters, whether they can swim or not. Sometimes their bodies are thrown violently against the rocks. An onlooker from the great stone bridge might imagine that here were hundreds of men anxious to end their lives by drowning, like the starving men of Sussex before Wilfred taught them that the sea is filled with fish. And if anyone should drown during this purgation he is accounted more than fortunate in his death. Death, after all, is of little significance in Hindustan, where the wheel of life works out human destiny from one existence to another. It is right and proper that men of high and low estate shall lose their individuality in some common act of devotion ; and of what concern was it to other Hindus that a certain young man who was performing his ablutions at Nasik happened to be the son of a Prime Minister and a barrister of the Inner Temple ? That an Englishwoman called Annie Besant tried half-heartedly to convert him to Theosophy—that a Christian *sadhu*, a prince of the Church of Rome, once dismissed him with a few words of courtesy—meant nothing. Here was a man who had dared to defy the edicts of his caste, and who, despite the ceremonial bath, scarcely deserved to be redeemed from the stigma of excommunication. And, indeed, it so happened that his bath, though it was

followed later by a meal to members of his caste in Rajkot, never completely reconciled his caste. Those who had eaten with him in Rajkot were prepared to receive him once more into full membership. Others could not forgive him his transgressions. He had crossed the Arabian Sea and drunk deep—so, at least, they imagined—at the wells of English culture, and now that he was back again in India he wore trousers instead of a *dhoti*. The dissatisfied section commanded other Modh Banias to have nothing to do with the outcast, and so vigorously was their command applied that for long his wife's relatives were not willing to meet him, except in secret.

Gandhi's relations with his wife had, indeed, become a problem. She was no longer a little girl. She had not seen her husband for three years. She was the mother of a boy aged four, and during her husband's long absence her personality had been taking shape. Meanwhile Gandhi's personality was more pronounced than before. He was more obstinate and wilful. He could lay down the law on what was done in England and—more trying than anything else—he came back a crank about food. His marriage was ordained by Kaba and not by him. Only in a Hindu society would two such children have become man and wife. During all those chaste and lonely days in London Gandhi may have thought far more frequently of Putlibai than he did of his wife. The wife was not to know that day by day Gandhi was becoming more of an ascetic, and in married life asceticism is a failure unless it is practised willingly by both partners. Brief letters from London could not have conveyed to a simple Kathiawari girl what was passing in her husband's mind ; and so the veil is discreetly drawn over the reunion between the elegant barrister of the Inner Temple and the girl who wore elaborate rings on her ears and nose, as well as a caste-mark

on her brow. Did the barrister recall that unchecked schoolboy lust that lost a mother her first child soon after it was born ? Did he at that moment recall the marriage ceremony which he enjoyed with childlike eagerness and, so doing, regard his father as the abettor of a social scourge? It was not his fault if, after three years of enforced celibacy, he shirked a return to the responsibilities of marriage. Still less was it the fault of an unlettered girl—instrument of passion and then of sorrow—that she failed completely to interpret either the mind or the moods of her lord. A trained psychologist would understand the misery Gandhi was inflicting upon himself. He would understand equally well the misery Gandhi was inflicting upon his wife. But such understanding was denied Gandhi. Scenes of rage and jealousy were bound to follow, and on one occasion Gandhi sent his wife back to her father's household. A sense of frustration dominated Gandhi. Marriage was a graver impediment than the placing of Porbandar under commission; for it stood in the way of his inward career. Marriage had to be endured as a trial before it could be embraced as a discipline.

Old Mavji Dave was not far wrong when he said that it was quite easy for a man to become a barrister in England. The ordeal comes when he starts to practise, and Gandhi was having very bad luck. The prestige of his father and grandfather was no longer left to help him. Just because he wore trousers and a turban, Gandhi expected the richer Kathiawari clients to come to him. India loves law-suits even more than Mexico or Ireland. Yet there are comparatively few Indians who will pay for the services of a trousered barrister of the Inner Temple when a *vakil* in an unkempt *dhoti* is capable of giving equally good legal advice for a quarter of the fee. The Gandhis, already hard hit by their political reverses, were finding an

anglicized member of their family a new embarrassment. It was not enough that the brother should have bought new cups and saucers from the local *bazar* : the barrister of the Inner Temple wanted in addition large supplies of cocoa and oatmeal porridge; and he was developing alarming theories on the right sort of food to eat.

In the end, since he fared so badly in Kathiawar, his brother and his friends decided to send him to Bombay, where, they hoped, he would acquire a practical knowledge of the High Court. Day after day a briefless barrister walked in and out of the High Court—the largest of Gilbert Scott's Bombay monstrosities. If he had walked more often into the Law Library he might have found several young men who were destined to play an important part in political agitation, as well as in preparation for Indian reforms; but Gandhi does not seem to have sat in the Library either frequently or long. Instead, he stayed in a room in the heart of the city, where he employed a dirty and irreligious Brahman to be his cook. Gandhi busily experimented with vegetarian dishes, and they were probably successful, for the Brahman cook expressed no scruples about dining with a master whose caste was lower than his own. But if ever Gandhi sent accounts of his new dishes to Kathiawar, the Gandhi household must have shaken their heads.

Bombay did not make Gandhi a promising lawyer. Yet it was able to mark a second turning-point in his life; for it brought him the friendship of Raychand, a poet and nephew of the top-hatted doctor who, at Southampton, had impressed a homesick youth with the overwhelming importance of being well dressed. Raychand was twenty-five at the time of his meeting with Gandhi. He had, like Gandhi's mother, a natural genius for religion. Obedient to a family calling, he had become a jewel merchant. Yet,

however lovely the jewel before him might be, he was always willing to put it on one side and discuss religion. He had steeped himself in the Hindu scriptures. His learning appealed to Gandhi, and so did his mysticism. Throughout his life Gandhi has found it necessary to acknowledge the mystic in others. The mystic in himself is dwarfed by the moral reformer. If Manning had spoken more than his few brief words of welcome, Gandhi might have liked him less. He could have talked more deeply to Newman. Yet, while liking Manning less, he would have seen a man strangely resembling himself—a man willing to sacrifice wealth and honours, to forget utterly his marriage, to embrace poverty and an apostolic simplicity of life. The one thing that neither Manning nor Gandhi could willingly surrender was power. The love of power, which Ota and Kaba Gandhi possessed, was in his blood. And power, as Gandhi sat talking to Raychand, was the one thing lacking.

Hitherto, almost all the Hindu scriptures had been closed books to Gandhi. They were now to be interpreted to him by a man richer in mind and spiritual experience than the two Theosophists who, in London, wanted to read with him Sir Edwin Arnold's translation of the *Song Celestial*. Gandhi's values were undergoing a change, and if he was slack and unsuccessful at the Bar he had this excuse—that he no longer expected or desired the Prime Ministership of Porbandar. He was sure some special vocation would come to him.

Weeks ran into months. A young wife waited in Kathiawar. She had no right to complain. It may have dawned upon the brother that Gandhi cared less for the law than Raychand for jewels. Anyway, he could soon keep him in Bombay no longer, and a most unsuccessful member of the family returned to Kathiawar. But if Gandhi was

without success, he was not without redeeming qualities. He had at least been to England. What was more, in England he had actually met the official who now, as Political Agent at Rajkot, was showing his brother every sign of displeasure. The brother saw clearly what would happen. The barrister of the Inner Temple must plead personally with the Political Agent. It says much for his *savoir faire* that Gandhi was extremely reluctant to carry out this mission. It says more for his affection for his brother that he eventually agreed to call on the Political Agent and attempt the hopeless task. When Gandhi asked for an appointment he got it. He reminded the Political Agent of their acquaintance in London. The Political Agent stiffened immediately. Was this young man involved already in one of the interminable intrigues of Kathiawar? He had come, Gandhi proceeded, to plead his brother's cause. At once the Political Agent said that he would hear no more. If the brother sought redress, he added, he must apply through the proper channels. Gandhi was told to go. Instead, he remained pleading. Whereupon the Political Agent, who was obviously a quick-tempered person, ordered a servant to show Gandhi the door. Without any hesitation the servant placed his hands on Gandhi's shoulders and pushed him out of the room. Thus was Gandhi unceremoniously treated in the State of which for a short time Kaba Gandhi had been Prime Minister.

Anger swelled up. The man who had been charming to him in London treated him with contempt in Rajkot. It was more than Gandhi could bear. "You have insulted me," he wrote promptly to the Political Agent, and he threatened legal proceedings. "You were rude to me," came an imperturbable reply. "You are at liberty to proceed against me as you wish." To an anglicized Indian the manners of the governing class are particularly intolerable.

The Indian who has come to London sees them in their own homes, where they are more than courteous to strangers and foreigners. He accompanies them to the large restaurants and hotels, the theatre and the most exclusive clubs. Never once is he allowed to feel that the colour of his skin is a barrier to social intercourse. But in India something happens. The Indian Mutiny set up a complex that even now is not completely destroyed, though the old arrogance is vanishing. Anglo-India became, at some indefinable period of her history, as caste-ridden as India herself. She has her own Untouchables—men and women who, because of their occupations or the defects of their education, may never enter those clubs that are the centre of European life in India. Born and bred in an Indian State, where the administration is Indian and where the Englishman is only a casual sojourner, Gandhi had not much opportunity of realizing the overwhelming importance of the Englishman in British India. It is true that his stay in Bombay should have taught him something about the Englishman. Bombay, however, is a city planned and built by Indian capital and enterprise. For years the English importers, who form the bulk of the European population in Bombay, have been content to play second fiddle to the wealthy Parsi and Mohammedan cotton magnates and merchants. Not infrequently the Englishmen of Bombay have been among the first to promote and welcome new reforms.

A moment's reflection might have reassured Gandhi that the Political Agent was not the wretch he imagined him to be. Few Englishmen are fitted by physique or pigmentation for a life in India. The heat is a sore trial, and Englishmen are to be forgiven if they become quick-tempered and irritable. The trials they impose upon their servants and their Indian acquaintances are frequently no worse than

the trials they impose on each other. Gandhi's method of approach was wrong. Moreover, it was the man's duty, as Political Agent in Rajkot, to be on guard against all intrigues and undue influences. If he committed the mistake of supposing that Gandhi was an intriguer he could probably refer to many well-authenticated cases where anglicized Indians—barristers of the Inner Temple and graduates of Balliol—had been bribed to use their influence with friends among the great governing class. The least that one can say about this incident—an incident which affected Gandhi's future life as much as the announcement of his father's death immediately after cohabiting with a pregnant girl-wife, and as much even as his meeting with Raychand—is that there were faults on both sides.

Gandhi would not listen to reason and almost immediately he prepared to proceed against the Political Agent in the courts. Fortunately, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta happened to be in Rajkot at the time, and when he heard of Gandhi's decision he sent word that he was not to be so foolish. If he wanted to earn his living under the British *raj* he must be ready to pocket innumerable insults. "Tell Gandhi," he said, "he has yet to learn life." It was the advice given to him in London by Mr Frederick Pincutt, when he urged him to read not only Kaye and Malleson's *History of the Mutiny*, but "one or two books on human nature." It may have been a pity, after all, that Gandhi did not read Kaye and Malleson's *History of the Mutiny*.

And yet, even when his pride was hurt, Gandhi seems to have made an admirable distinction between the *personnel* and the system of government. It was not the Political Agent's fault that he may have suffered from a bad liver and the cumulative effects of imported food that was far from wholesome. His tragedy was that the system of government encouraged him to be rude and overbearing.

For when, later on, Gandhi called on the Indian administrator of Porbandar, who of all people should have shown courtesy to Kaba's son, he found him a man even more tyrannical than the Political Agent in Rajkot. It does not suffice to exchange an English for an Indian *personnel*, unless the system of government is completely overhauled. Only once before had Mohandas Gandhi come face to face with the white man's prestige and authority in India. That was when Mr Giles, the Inspector of Schools, ordered him to spell "kettle." A Political Agent who lost his temper was a scarcely less ridiculous figure.

The results of this ignominious expulsion were necessarily disastrous. The chances of the brother's return to power became more remote than they were before. Gandhi was seeing Kathiawar in a new light. It had smiled upon him in his boyhood, when he would look up at the sky to detect some break in the clouds. But now he saw that it was filled with bribery and corruption. Ota Gandhi as he moved from Porbandar to Junagadh—Kaba Gandhi as he flirted in turn with the Dewanships of Porbandar, Rajkot and Vankaner—knew what Kathiawar was really like. Gandhi was seeing the country not merely with the eyes of an adult, but with the eyes of a reformer. The spectacle made him wretched. It was not enough that he should carry out his first juvenile resolution—utterly to destroy Untouchability. Society needed to be reformed from top to bottom. Could it be done?

It was scarcely possible for Gandhi to keep himself uncontaminated. What money he was earning he owed entirely to the influence and patronage of his brother, and the brother believed in charging commissions. It was the recognized practice. The brother could not abandon such a practice without betraying his partner, and since Gandhi could not refuse commissions without betraying his brother,

he found himself caught in the vicious circle of Kathiawari acquisitiveness. How can one reform society when one is actually a participant in its malpractices?

As Gandhi was pondering this deep question there came an invitation for him to go out to South Africa for a year, and to assist the counsel appearing for a Porbandar firm that was claiming forty thousand pounds. The firm was to pay him a first-class fare and a sum of one hundred and five pounds. Gandhi did not require much persuasion. No doubt, he had abandoned for ever the dream of becoming Prime Minister of Porbandar, and if his brother failed to dissuade him from going to South Africa, it may have been that he also had come sorrowfully to the conclusion that there was no assured future for Mohandas in Kathiawar. Moreover he knew, from past experience, that when Mohandas had made up his mind to do a thing nothing will stop him. This strain in him is so strong that one wonders why Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's words succeeded in putting an end to the threatened law-suit against the Political Agent.

And yet a great question remains unanswered—did Gandhi feel it to be his destiny to go out to South Africa, for a job that most able young Indians would have rejected summarily? Or did he gaze upon the moral problem which the condition of Kathiawar presented, and turn aside? More than once Gandhi has faced the task which it seemed to be his destiny to fulfil, and then—having faced it—he has withdrawn, seeking shelter in mental flight, in renunciation and—is it unfair to add?—in the courting of imprisonment.

For the second time a wife, who is also a mother, stays behind in Kathiawar, and wonders when her husband, whose movements she cannot fathom, will return to India.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Ishmael and Esau"

A SMALL boat carried Gandhi across the Equator to Durban and its pleasant winter climate. A change in temperature made no difference to his style of dress; for an unlettered Mohammedan, who was waiting at the quayside to greet him, noticed with more concern than amusement that his guest from Porbandar wore a stiff collar, a bow tie and a frock-coat, such as the European settlers of Natal were accustomed to wear when they attended each other's funeral. Except that Gandhi had exchanged his silk hat for a small turban, he looked as though he were once again to accompany Narayan Hemchandra on a visit to the Cardinal at Westminster. Despite this elaborate attention to his dress, Gandhi was making no favourable impression. He showed to the hostile settlers who stood at the quayside that yet another " coolie " barrister was attempting to rise above his community socially. He was sensitive and quick to discern this hostility. It was like walking once more through the streets of Southampton on a Sunday afternoon in the year of the Queen's first Jubilee. Nor was this antipathy and contempt confined to Europeans who passed him in the highways of Durban; for when his host, Dada Abdullah Sheth, took him to the Durban Court, the magistrate ordered Gandhi to remove his turban; and, rather than obey such an order, Gandhi promptly left the court. A local regulation, he discovered subsequently, permitted Indians who wore the Mohammedan costume to retain their turbans in court. Hindus would have to sit in the court with their heads uncovered, though a Hindu would no more discard his turban in court than a bishop his

mitre in church. Not since his encounter with the Political Agent in Rajkot had Gandhi's proud temper so strained at the leash. He would allow the magistrate of Natal no opportunity for insulting him again. In future, he declared, he would wear an English hat with his frock-coat. Whereupon Abdullah Sheth grew seriously alarmed. " If you do," he argued, " you will pass for a waiter "—advice Gandhi needed sadly while he was still in London. Gandhi bowed to the inevitable. The top-hat, if it ever journeyed with Gandhi from Bombay to Durban, remained carefully concealed in tissue paper, and Gandhi found consolation in writing to all the newspapers to justify his histrionic departure from the court. Planters, glancing at their papers, decided that an exceedingly troublesome person had come amongst them. Gandhi had made his first venture into journalism.

Within a week, it was necessary to send Gandhi to Pretoria. Abdullah Sheth proceeded to lecture the young man—who seemed never to discard his stiff collar and frock-coat, who had come already into conflict with a magistrate and provoked a newspaper controversy—on the right behaviour of the Indian in a country where he was manifestly unwanted. He was to buy a first-class ticket, and when he reached Pietermaritzburg he was to book his bedding. Gandhi saw the point of buying a first-class ticket. First-class travelling was, after all, one of the inducements to his trivial job in South Africa; but that there was any point in booking one's bedding at Pietermaritzburg Gandhi refused to acknowledge. He wanted to economize—and bedding cost exactly five shillings.

And when, indeed, the train reached Pietermaritzburg at nine in the evening, a railway servant offered bedding to the Indian in full mourning as a matter of course. The

Indian's eccentric refusal puzzled him, and he walked away. There followed a passenger who, when he saw that the " coolie " did not intend to provide himself with clean Christian bedding, reported the abominable affair to the stationmaster. Obediently, an official arrived to order Gandhi into the van compartment.

" I have a first-class ticket," he cried.

" That doesn't matter," the official answered, and when he saw that Gandhi could be ejected only by force he summoned the aid of the police, who pushed him out of the train. His luggage came tumbling after him. The train steamed away, and Gandhi, speechless with indignation, was left alone on the platform. The officials seized the luggage, which contained his overcoat. A long winter's night had to be spent several hundred feet above sea-level, and the waiting-room, conveniently unlocked, contained neither fire nor light. In the night, a solitary passenger walked into the waiting-room. He was shy and yet anxious to talk. But Gandhi shrank from all human contact. What race of men were these whose qualities ranged from the austere courtesy of Manning to officials who believed that a van compartment was a fitting receptacle for a man with a brown skin? For what purpose was an Indian cursed and despised? If Gandhi had been in Pretoria a few years beforehand he might have heard the explanation which President Kruger himself chose to give.

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One evening—four years after his triumph at Majuba—Paul Kruger laid aside his Bible and went to listen to the Indians who were waiting to speak to him in the courtyard of his official residence. They had dared to expect that he would receive them within the residence itself. " Coolie " merchants and tradesmen from Johannesburg came to lodge their complaints. They made long speeches and

talked of the rights of citizenship, which seemed to Paul Kruger to be decidedly beside the point. Soon his patience gave way.

" You are," he shouted, " the descendants of Ishmael, and therefore from your very birth you are bound to slavery. As you are the descendants of Esau and Ishmael, we cannot admit you to rights placing you on an equality with ourselves. You must remain content with the rights we grant you." Having exhausted his references to Scriptures few of his audience had read, the President of the Transvaal dismissed the " coolie " merchants and tradesmen without further ceremony. Paul Kruger returned to his Bible.

Kruger believed in direct action. When he was but thirteen years of age he had taken part in the " godly slaughter " that led to the defeat of Dingaan, the Zulu King. When his rival, Thomas François Burgers, ruled as President of the Transvaal, Paul Kruger urged the now familiar device of non-payment of taxes. Once the Englishmen of Johannesburg—his hated Uitlanders—came to beg him to confer a legal status upon the English language, and Kruger had told them: " This is my country, and these are my laws. Those who do not like to obey my laws can leave my country." It was a comparatively simple matter to compare a handful of Indians with the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, and when he returned to his Bible, Kruger believed, like Podsnap, that he had dismissed his problem. The problem, however, was already a quarter of a century old.

On 16th November 1860 a steamer crawled into Durban, after a long and uneventful passage from Madras. Scared and chattering Indians stepped ashore. They carried cumbrous parcels on their heads; their teeth were gory with betel-nut; they expectorated freely. From the moment

of their arrival, onlookers had dubbed them " coolies " and " Sammies," and these names they retain in South Africa to this day. They had come to work in the sugar-plantations of Natal, as labourers under a five-years indenture. European settlers were making yet another bid for cheap labour. They had done their best to convert the Zulu into an effective hewer of wood and drawer of water, and they had failed. The Zulu outnumbered the European by ten to one, and, if he had wished so to do, he could have satisfied the settlers' demand for cheap labour. He was, however, reluctant to work for more than six months in the year, for his wants were few. He believed himself to be—as indeed he was—physically the finest of God's creations. He gloried in his nakedness, which annoyed the importers of cotton and woollen goods, since there was much to be gained from forcing four hundred thousand Zulus to walk abroad decently apparelled. The Government of Natal did, in fact, ordain that no Zulu man should enter a town unless he were clothed from the waist to the knees, while the Zulu women were to be first clothed from the chest downwards. But the only immediate result was that the Zulu avoided the towns more persistently than before, and so long as he was in his own country districts he remained indolent and half-naked. It was not easy to train this child of nature in the arts of citizenship; and it was not until the Government imposed the poll-tax and the hut-tax that Zulus were willing to become the servants of Europeans, while others migrated to the gold-mine and the diamond-mine, where they often developed miner's phthisis, from which many had no hope of recovery.

Aware that the Zulu was never likely to be an effective labourer in the sugar-plantations, European settlers in Natal entered into negotiations with the Government of India. The words of Queen Victoria's first proclamation

to her Indian subjects were still ringing in official ears; and yet the Government of India saw no scandal in the negotiations. It was following precedent. Before the Mutiny, labourers had entered the Mauritius under indenture. These indentured Indians had seldom, if ever, alarmed conscientious secretaries in Calcutta with their grievances. Gujerati traders who pursued the indentured labourers to the Mauritius had flourished exceedingly. To all appearances a contented Indian community had come to life south of the Equator, and there was no reason to suppose that success in the Mauritius could not be repeated on the mainland of Africa. If ever doubts assailed the minds of officials in India, they were effectively subdued by the practice of entering one safeguard after another on the indenture-forms. Officials forgot, however, to safeguard the religious customs of the indentured labourers, and they failed to fashion the means whereby a labourer could obtain redress against the fraudulent settler. Sincerely believing that, once the period of five-years indenture was over, the freed immigrants could pursue happier careers in a land offering more varied opportunities than over-crowded India, the officials had never troubled to ask themselves whether settlers who concerned themselves only with securing cheap labour were really fitted to protect the Asiatic. John Stuart Mill and the Manchester men, whose views were now finding academic expression in Oxford, would not have complained too strongly of the methods which the negotiators employed. The official listened with respect to the economist, and the economist had not yet learned that wealth is inseparable from welfare. The Natal settler could ignore with absolute impunity all the safeguards entered on the indenture-forms, and he knew it. The Indian immigrants were, in fact, as near to slavery as it was possible to be in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

And as the century advanced the problem grew more complicated. The first immigrants had been torn from the slums of Calcutta and Madras. They were precisely those labourers who, in their own country, might have been classed as unemployable. They were the flotsam and jetsam of India, and the cheap-labour fodder of Natal. They begat children. Of necessity they became a social menace as soon as their indentures were ended and they were free. The European settler was too keen on his profits ever to reflect upon the prospect of creating a new Bantu civilization out of the Europeans, the Zulus and the Indians of Natal; and even if the Indian admixture had been desirable, it was not from the "coolie" class that the eugenist would have obtained his recruits.

Just as tradesmen and merchants followed the indentured labourer to the Mauritius, so they followed him to Natal. The trading community grew in size and importance, and thus attracted lawyers and small professional men. A new society was making its appearance in Natal. It was, moreover, a society composed of three strata—sixty thousand indentured labourers, ten thousand ex-indentured labourers and ten thousand free Indians. How were forty thousand Europeans successfully to hold their own against four hundred thousand Zulus and eighty thousand Indians? The alarm was raised, and yet the demand for cheap Indian labour did not diminish; for batches of indentured labourers continued to arrive at Durban with distressing frequency, until the Viceroy's Council, wiser and better informed than their predecessors, stopped the supply altogether. So long as the labourer remained indentured the settler raised few objections, since the movements of the indentured labourer were easy to control. The menace came from the ex-indentured Indian and the free Indian immigrant. These men were apt, on the slightest provocation, to

remind the authorities that they were the free subjects of Queen Victoria. They talked frequently of their Aryan blood and of the rights of citizenship. One might call them —whatever their rank or wealth—" coolies." One might address the individual Indian as " Sammy." Yet it was never possible to identify the Aryan with the Bantu, who accepted his lot in the seemingly permanent scheme of things. In short, the Indian, as soon as he had ceased to be an instrument of cheap labour, was treated as an intruder.

Once the Indians had begun to settle in their thousands in Natal—once there came into existence a generation of Indians who had never seen their Motherland—it was only a matter of time before they crossed the border to the Transvaal, to Cape Colony and the Orange Free State. In the year of Majuba, an aged Mohammedan trader—Sheth Abubakar—opened a shop in Pretoria. He was able to purchase valuable land in one of the main streets of the Transvaal capital, and his obvious prosperity attracted other Indian traders, first to Pretoria and later to the mushroom city of Johannesburg. Even Chinese traders found their way to the Transvaal. The Indian traders had not entered the Transvaal on the pretence that they were ministering to indentured labourers, for in the Transvaal none existed. Though for a few years to come the suzerainty of Queen Victoria was still to be acknowledged in the Transvaal, the State was once more virtually an independent Republic, and Indians who laid stress on their British citizenship were not exactly welcomed. They provoked the animosity of the Uitlanders, with whom they were competing for property and profit on almost level terms; and it was not long before the Boer, impatient of a dual competition from Uitlander and " coolie," begged the Volksraad to expel all Indians from the Transvaal and to stop their trade. It was at this time that agitated Indian

leaders made their appeal to the President of the Transvaal, and when Kruger told them that Ishmael and Esau were their ancestors they feared the worst.

Kruger, however, was prepared to temper his Judaistic conclusions with human mercy. He declined to allow a complete expulsion of the Indians. Instead he gave his approval to a Law—Law 3 of 1885—which required every Indian trader in the Transvaal to register, at a personal cost of £25. No Indian was to enjoy the rights of Transvaal citizenship or to hold land in any part of the Republic. Whereupon, the Indian leaders made a second appeal, this time to the Agent, who represented the attenuated authority of Britain in the Transvaal. Their appeal was forwarded to the British Government, who held that Law 3 was a violation not only of the London Convention, but of other agreements made by President Kruger and Lord Derby. It was useless to pretend that the London Convention concerned only the Boers and the Uitlanders; for the "coolie" was as much a British subject as Rhodes or Jameson. The dispute was referred to arbitration, and as a result the Transvaal Government reduced the registration fee from £25 to £3, and removed the prohibition against the purchase of land. Land, however, could be purchased only in certain locations fixed by the Transvaal Government. These locations were frequently undesirable and thus—as Mr Gandhi himself was to write nearly forty years later—"the Indians became the 'Untouchables' of the Transvaal; for it can truly be said that there is no difference between these locations and the Untouchables' quarters in India. Just as the Hindus believe that the touch of the Dheds, or residence in their neighbourhood, leads to pollution of high-caste people, so did the Europeans in the Transvaal believe for all practical purposes that physical contact with the Indians would defile them."

In Cape Colony the lot of the Indian settler was more fortunate. The presence of the Malay, for whom Dutch was the native language, accustomed the Colony to the Mohammedan, who felt more than a little sympathy with the Indian co-religionist; and a Liberal tradition in the Colony was well maintained by Sir John Molteno, by Mr J. X. Merriman, a prophet of the future Union of South Africa, by Olive Schreiner and her brother, a former Attorney-General. Settlers in Cape Colony looked often with anxiety upon the strident activities of Natal and the Transvaal, and Cape Town will probably not cease to feel superior to Johannesburg. It is from the Cape of Good Hope that the future civilization of South Africa—a Euro-Negroid product—will emerge, and it remains to be seen whether such a civilization is capable of assimilating the Asiatic in its midst.

It cannot be said, however, that before the Boer War the complaints of Indians in South Africa deeply stirred their own countrymen. Young men continued to arrive at Durban—as did Gandhi himself—completely unprepared for the treatment they were to receive. Ministers and high officials were almost alone in their familiarity with the facts, and when war upon the Transvaal began, both Lord Selborne and Lord Lansdowne declared that the scandalous treatment of Indians in the Republic was a primary cause of the conflict. Whereupon newspapers proceeded to describe this treatment with some detail. It was, of course, necessary to make the Great Boer War popular.

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Gandhi, hugging his frock-coat round himself for warmth, debated what he should do. His first impulse was to take the next train back to Durban and to be rid for ever of the contempt and insulting behaviour of Natal. He would return to his brother in Rajkot and to the

fast-maturing girl-wife who sheltered under the family roof at Porbandar. He would confess himself once more a failure. Yet the evil in Natal was already manifest in Kathiawar. The Political Agent was but one remove from the settler in Natal, who thought it right to hurl indignities upon the Asiatic. These false standards became almost a challenge to the moralizer, and when at last the sun lit the chill heights of Pietermaritzburg, Gandhi, cold and suffering, had made up his mind. He would stay in South Africa until the legal case which attracted him from Kathiawar had come to an end.

Gandhi had cash. Too frugal to spend five shillings on bedding, he was ready to spend a small fortune on a long explanatory telegram to the general manager of the railway, while another elaborate telegram informed the unhappy Abdullah Sheth that Gandhi had travelled no farther than Pietermaritzburg. In despair Abdullah Sheth wired to his Indian friends in the town. They came to the station to assure Gandhi that what had happened to him was not in the least unusual; and because Indians love talk and sympathy, they were content to remain with him until the passing of twenty-four hours brought the train from Durban once more to Pietermaritzburg. A penitent paid his five shillings for bedding and, for all we know, he slept soundly until the train reached Charlestown, which was then the railway terminus.

In the nineties it was by coach a two days' journey from Charlestown to Johannesburg. Fearful lest Gandhi should create fresh trouble at Charlestown, Abdullah Sheth had already sent a wire to the coach agent at Charlestown. That wire must have saved him, for, after claiming that Gandhi was travelling with a cancelled ticket, the coach agent arranged that he should sit on the outside seat ordinarily reserved for the conductor. The conductor him-

self sat inside the coach with the white passengers. It was, after all, more seemly that the white passengers should have the company of a white conductor than the company of a frock-coated " coolie." Unfortunately, there are distinctions scarcely less rigid among the white travellers. The conductor bore the ordeal until three in the afternoon, when the coach reached Pardekop. He then decided that he had earned the right to return to his accustomed seat by the driver. " So," as Gandhi subsequently described the event, " he took a piece of dirty sackcloth from the driver, spread it on the footboard and, addressing me, said: 'Sammy, you sit on this. I want to sit near the driver.' The insult was more than I could bear. In fear and trembling I said to him: 'It was you who seated me here, though I should have been accommodated inside. That insult I put up with. Now that you want to sit outside and smoke, you would have me sit at your feet. I refuse to do so, but I am prepared to sit inside.' "

The actual conversation, one imagines, was very different, for the conductor allowed him no time in which to make his excuses. " He seized me by the arm and tried to drag me down. I clung to the brass rails of the coach-box and was determined to keep my hold even at the risk of breaking my wrist-bones. The passengers were witnessing the scene—the man swearing at me, dragging and belabouring me, and I remaining still. He was strong and I was weak. Some of the passengers were moved to pity, and exclaimed: 'Man, let him alone. He is right. If he can't stay there, let him come and sit with us.' " Opinion turned against the conductor. Apathy rather than cruelty tolerated the depressed condition of the " coolie " in Natal and the Transvaal. Here was concrete injustice, and when the conductor realized that he was winning no appreciation or sympathy he gave the dirty sackcloth to a Hottentot servant

and took the vacated seat. The Hottentot servant seems to have sat on the footboard without a murmur. It was not for him to complain, as the " coolie " barrister had done, against the racial prejudice. Gandhi had not yet learned to make himself one with the world's " untouchables."

Again and again the conductor cast angry glances at the " coolie." Once they had reached Standerton, where the passengers to Johannesburg were to stay for the night, he would thrash his enemy. Gandhi heard these threats with fear and trembling. He prayed to God.

Dada Abdullah Sheth had come once more to the rescue, for another of his telegrams brought the Indian community at Standerton to meet the coach, and the conductor, either because the number of " coolie " onlookers would be too large or because a " coolie " is not really worth attacking, slunk away. Abdullah Sheth was running no risks, for even in Johannesburg telegrams were urging conscientious Indians to await the coach from Charlestown. Somehow or other Gandhi escaped their vigilance. He entered a cab and asked to be driven to the Grand National Hotel, and when, after the inevitable refusal to admit him, Gandhi reached an Indian's shop, his humbler host laughed heartily at the escapade. Applying for a room at the Grand National Hotel was as good a joke as the frock-coat.

A railway linked Johannesburg with Pretoria, Gandhi's destination. Friends had pointed out to him that, though he might travel first-class in Natal at his own risk, the railway regulations in the Transvaal forbade an Indian to travel either first-class or second-class. " Then," said Gandhi, " I shall go by cab to Pretoria." And when the shopkeeper complained that Pretoria was as much as thirty-seven miles away, Gandhi asked for the railway regulations, so that he might discover some loophole. This, of course, he did. He, therefore, wrote to the stationmaster at

Johannesburg and explained that he was a barrister who always travelled first. Lest the station-master should have his own notions of a " coolie " barrister, Gandhi announced that he would call for an answer in person. He had decided to dress faultlessly in English clothes, which meant the familiar frock-coat and necktie. At the appointed hour Gandhi strolled majestically to the counter. He asked for his first-class ticket, and then threw a gold sovereign on the counter. It was the decade for smart gestures, and Arnold Bennett, when he bought a first-class ticket for the first time, must have been as dandyish as Gandhi in the booking-office at Johannesburg station. The man smiled. " I can see you are a gentleman," he said. Such is the power of dress.

One more attempt was made—at Germiston—to dislodge Gandhi from his first-class compartment; but a first-class English passenger successfully intervened, and Gandhi reached Pretoria without further incident. With the help of an American negro he found an hotel from which well-dressed " coolies " were not excluded. It was called Johnson's Family Hotel.

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The journey from Durban to Pretoria had been for Gandhi a spiritual Æneid. He was now prepared for the blows and humiliations which as an Indian he would have to bear during his year's residence in South Africa. There were, however, many consolations.

A small but impressive minority rebelled against the behaviour of the many, and Gandhi soon found himself in the company of men and women who, while they cared primarily for the salvation of his soul, cared also for his social comfort. The attorney with whom his legal case brought him at once into contact happened to be a lay preacher, who felt it his duty to remove Gandhi from

Johnson's Family Hotel to a pious landlady capable of sympathizing with his views on vegetarianism. Within a few days the attorney had introduced Gandhi to all his Christian friends. Morning after morning these friends met for a few minutes in prayer. They persuaded Gandhi to attend their prayer-meetings, and for his special benefit they added a prayer for his conversion and salvation. These friends represented the infinite variety of Protestant experience. Some were Quakers. One was a Plymouth Brother, who urged Gandhi to believe that attempts at improvement and atonement were futile and who deliberately committed sins in order to show the unimpressed Hindu that sins need not disturb the transgressor's peace of mind. In their desire to convert Gandhi, the attorney and his friends invited him to the Wellington Convention, where devout men and women from all parts of Natal, the Transvaal and Cape Colony periodically assembled. In taking a " coolie barrister " with him to the Wellington Convention the attorney suffered several inconveniences, which Gandhi promptly detected. Unhappily, Gandhi was still not convinced of the perfectibility of the Christian religion. If he read the Bible more intelligently than he read it while he was a raw and half-lettered law student in London, he also read an English translation of the Koran, and the Koran led him to other books on Islam, one of which was Carlyle's not unprofitable study of the Prophet. He corresponded with Raychand—the God-conscious pearl merchant of Bombay—and Raychand fervently believed that his "coolie" friend could find a solution to all his difficulties by deeply penetrating still further into the Hindu Scriptures. Many of the docrtines which appeared to be repugnant to reason and humanity were found on closer examination, so Raychand argued, to form no true part of the Hindu teaching. Gandhi, who hated Untouchability, was soon able

to convince himself that Untouchability was a corruption of the Hindu faith. It had crept in during a decadent period of Hindu history. It did not belong to the doctrine of caste, in which Gandhi has consistently believed. The truth is that not one of these Christian friends who so ardently desired Gandhi's conversion was a profound thinker. While they sent him their tracts and commentaries to read Gandhi was delighting in the pages of Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. The attorney and his friends waited patiently. They persuaded him to attend services in a Wesleyan Chapel, which Gandhi found worldly and insincere. Frequently he fell asleep, with a nonchalance more easily associated with the regular pew-renter. Moreover, his non-Christian habits of thought were apt to disturb the mental peace of the Pretoria flock, and a good lady stiffened visibly when he referred in glowing terms to the Gautama's compassion. She became still more alarmed when her little boy, aged five, asked for an apple instead of meat, because he wanted to do what Mr Gandhi did. Another was added to the number of Christian households in which the " coolie barrister " was not to be received.

Gandhi, however, has stated his position with the utmost clarity in the pages of the autobiography. " It is impossible," he wrote, " for me to believe that I could go to heaven or attain salvation only by becoming a Christian. . . . It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate Son of God, and that only he who believed in Him should have everlasting life. If God could have sons, all of us were His sons. If Jesus was like God, or God Himself, then all men were like God and could be God Himself. My reason was not ready to believe literally that Jesus by His death and by His blood redeemed the sins of the world. Metaphorically, there might be some truth in it. Again, according to Christianity, only human beings had

souls, and not other living beings, for whom death meant complete extinction; while I held a contrary belief. I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice and a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born. His death on the Cross was a great example to the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it my heart could not accept. The pious lives of Christians did not give me anything that the lives of men of other faiths had failed to give. I had seen in other lives just the same reformation that I heard of amongst Christians. Philosophically there was nothing extraordinary in Christian principles. From the point of view of sacrifice, it seemed to me that the Hindus greatly surpassed the Christians. It was impossible for me to regard Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions."

If Gandhi's attitude to Christianity was negative, he was at least forging a reasonable personal religion. Happiness, he was soon to find, lay in service to the community, and at that time the Indian community in South Africa was sadly in need of an intelligent servant. His own experience as he journeyed from Durban to Pretoria had shown him how vast was this field of service, and he had some excuse for writing to the railway authorities and telling them that even under their own regulations Indians were allowed to purchase first-class and second-class tickets. In due course the railway authorities replied, announcing that first-class and second-class tickets would be issued to Indians who were " properly dressed." Whereupon there followed a long correspondence about the requirements for being " properly dressed." The man who loved his frock-coat and necktie was occasionally hard to convince. But this emphasis upon dress and the right to travel first-class represented a stage in Gandhi's development. He was soon at closer grips with the vexed problems of Indian residence in South Africa,

when he urged upon the Indians of Pretoria the paramount necessity of cleanliness and good sanitation. Fundamentally, the improvement of this social condition—despite all the unfair regulations to which they had to submit—rested with themselves alone. It was, perhaps, significant that Gandhi's first speech in Pretoria—the first public speech of his life—dealt with the moral demand for strict truthfulness in business dealings. Moreover, the legal case which had brought Gandhi from Kathiawar to the Transvaal enabled him to realize still more the urgency of public service. The case was not a small one. His client, Dada Abdullah, was claiming the sum of forty thousand pounds from a kinsman, Tyeb Sheth. Gandhi believed that Dada Abdullah was morally in the right. He soon convinced himself that Dada Abdullah was also right in law. He saw, however, that litigation would ruin both parties. He recommended arbitration, to which, after indefatigable persuasion, the defendant agreed. And when the arbitration found in favour of Dada Abdullah, Gandhi had to use all his powers of persuasion once more before his client would agree to allow Tyeb Sheth to pay in instalments spread over a very long period. Dada Abdullah did not summon Gandhi from Kathiawar in order to be taught a lesson in charity to one's adversary. This settlement between two relatives was the greatest of Gandhi's early triumphs.

Yet life for him was far from easy. Insults did not cease. One day he passed the simple house in President Street at Pretoria where Paul Kruger sat reading his Bible and cleaning his guns. A solitary sentry stood on guard, and when he saw that a " coolie " dared to walk on the footpath he kicked him into the gutter. An Englishman who witnessed the scene came to Gandhi's rescue. Gandhi, however, would take no action. He was growing in grace and charity. The Englishman addressed the sentry in Dutch,

and the sentry had the decency to apologize. But Gandhi never walked beneath the shadow of Paul Kruger's house again.

A law forbade "coolies" and negroes to walk abroad after nine o'clock in the evening unless they had a permit. Gandhi's Quaker friend, who loved to discuss religion in the cool of the evening, could give permits to his own negro servants, but he could not give a permit to Gandhi without deliberate fraud. It was necessary, therefore, to make a personal appeal to the State Attorney, Dr Krause, who expressed sympathy and then wrote a letter authorizing Gandhi to remain out of doors whenever he chose, without police interference. Gandhi and the State Attorney were both members of the English Bar, and, in the years to come, Dr Krause was to be celebrated as the defendant in the "incitement to murder" trial. The Quaker and his Hindu friend could forget the insults of railway porters, the assaults of presidential sentries, and the interference of the police. They were but incidents in the life of a community whose standards needed to be rectified; and as the two men talked they made the great discovery—the secret of the bond which no amount of mutual misrepresentation and misunderstanding in India has been able to destroy—that Englishmen and Indians get on uncommonly well with each other.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Discipline of Leadership

ONE year's residence in South Africa became three. Dada Abdullah Sheth's legal case, which had first brought Gandhi to Pretoria, was ended, and the young barrister was now free to leave the country and return to his wife and family in Kathiawar. He did, indeed, take his leave of friends in Pretoria, and reached Durban, where Dada Abdullah Sheth —having long since overcome his fear of sartorial oddities— gave a farewell entertainment in his honour. Just before Gandhi was about to make his speech, a friend showed him a copy of the *Natal Mercury*. This announced that the Government was immediately to introduce in the Natal Legislative Council a Bill to disfranchise all Indians. The measure was dictated by the resentment that an alien race should threaten the domination of the white settlers by sheer weight of wealth and numbers. So far, the white settlers had not objected to the introduction of the indentured labourer; for cheap labour was still in demand. Neither the indentured nor the ex-indentured labourers had votes. The proposed Bill, therefore, would have hit only the free Indians, of whom not a few were wealthy men. The insult—for such the Indians called it, regardless of the fact that most of the free Indians were comparatively recent immigrants—was naturally directed against those Indians who could afford to agitate, and even pay the cost of a deputation to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Dada Abdullah Sheth's farewell entertainment for Gandhi became almost at once a protest committee meeting. The Indians assembled that night in Durban needed to agree upon a course of action. This implied that they also needed

a leader; and who could more effectively lead them than the man about to return to India? Gandhi seized his opportunity with eagerness. He was not yet twenty-five years old.

Almost before the farewell entertainment had ended, Gandhi was drawing up a petition to be presented to the Legislative Council. In the name of Dada Abdullah Sheth he dispatched a telegram requesting the Government to postpone the Bill, and the Government, surprised by this first manifestation of activity among Indian immigrants, postponed the Bill for two days. Meanwhile, Gandhi prepared a manifesto to be signed by Indians of all classes, whether or not they had been hitherto enfranchised. He became the chief speaker at meeting after meeting, and though his gifts for oratory are few, he roused enthusiasm wherever he went. Within a month ten thousand Indians had subscribed their names to the manifesto. The effect was merely to stiffen anti-Indian feeling within the Legislative Council, and the Bill of disfranchisement was passed by a comfortable majority. The last word, however, rested with the Colonial Secretary and the Liberal Government in London. The Bill was forwarded in due course to the Colonial Office. After it followed the Indians' manifesto, and when this manifesto reached the Colonial Office it was seen almost at once by sympathetic eyes, for the Secretary of State was none other than Lord Ripon. Gladstone had appointed Lord Ripon to be Viceroy of India for the purpose of instilling some of his well-worn Liberalism into our Indian policy. The appointment roused the hostility of nearly all Gladstone's Nonconformist followers, for Lord Ripon was a convert to Roman Catholicism, and it seemed to them unfair that a Roman Catholic should become Viceroy of India when a Roman Catholic was—until 1921—forbidden to become Viceroy of Ireland. A

Yorkshire country gentleman walked round the Simla hills as though they formed part of his personal estate. Moreover, he insisted on walking alone, and there were occasions when a conscientious Viceregal office-holder knew not how to justify his existence. One among them, fussier than his fellows, discovered which was Lord Ripon's favourite walk. He also discovered that the beauty and calm of that walk was slightly disfigured by a small shrine which a very poor man had erected. Promptly and without authority the official ordered the man to remove his shrine. The aggrieved man waited until the Viceroy arrived, walking alone. He threw himself at the Viceroy's feet and begged that his shrine might be left where it was. That afternoon a dejected official received from the Viceroy a severe lecture on the ethics of personal freedom. The chief event of Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty had been the introduction of the Ilbert Bill, which was to enable Indian magistrates to try European offenders. The Bill provoked a fury which the modern young Englishman—cheerfully paying the fines for motoring offences which an Indian magistrate politely inflicts upon him—cannot understand. Yet behind all the savage hostility to Lord Ripon there loomed the realization that the Viceroy was attempting to remove one of the main props of British ascendancy in India; for people capable of administering their own laws are capable also of introducing them.

Lord Ripon was still serving his old chief, but in an office where contact with Indian sentiment was seldom made. The Indians' manifesto touched his heart. But even if Gandhi had not persuaded ten thousand immigrants to subscribe their names, it remained almost a foregone conclusion that Lord Ripon would have disallowed the Natal Government's Bill. His decision, when it became known in Durban, exacerbated feeling. Colonials had no

great love for the Liberal Government. That year Gladstone was to resign the Prime Ministership and never again to enter the House of Commons. Soon Lord Ripon was to be replaced by Mr Joseph Chamberlain, and before the feet of the multitude trod casually over Gladstone's grave, in the North Transept of Westminster Abbey, the feet of the new Imperialists were treading down Gladstonian Liberalism as though it were the dust and ashes of antique history. In fact, the disallowing of the Natal Government's Bill was almost the last typical act of Gladstonian Liberalism before its final expiry.

Having agreed to lead the Indians in their protest against the Bill, Gandhi had to forgo his voyage to India. Kasturbai must wait for a husband with whom she had spent less than half of her married life, and the sons must wait for a father they scarcely remembered; for the newly acquired leadership was taking Gandhi he knew not where. It was not enough to secure from Lord Ripon the disallowing of the Bill and then to leave the Indian community to face without a challenge the accusations of the white settlers. And what guarantee was there that Lord Ripon's successor would not gladly reverse the Liberal policy? For had not Gladstone sent Lord Ripon himself out to India with the understanding that he was to reverse the Afghan policy of Lord Lytton?

Dada Abdullah Sheth's farewell entertainment became a protest committee meeting; the protest committee became a party, and the party became the Natal Indian Congress, with young Gandhi as its principal speaker and organizer. The name and the methods were not original. They were a crib from the National Indian Congress, which had been founded and supported by two prominent Europeans—Mr A. O. Hume and Sir William Wedderburn—nine years beforehand. For more than thirty years Mr Hume had

been a zealous member of the Indian Civil Service; but he felt very keenly that " Government was out of touch with the people, that there was no safety for the masses till the administration was gradually leavened by a representative Indian element." As we look back to the first meeting of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay during the Christmas week of 1885, its programme seems mild and almost excessively loyal. One of its principal speakers—Mr Subramania Aiyar—declared that, by " a merciful dispensation of Providence, India, which was for centuries the victim of external aggression and plunder, of internal civil wars and general confusion, has been brought under the domination of the great British Power. I need not tell you how that event introduced a great change in the destiny of her people, how the inestimable good that has flowed from it has been appreciated by them."

But this tribute to the British *raj* saved neither Mr Hume nor Sir William Wedderburn from the ostracism of former colleagues and their wives, and even Lord Curzon—the last of Queen Victoria's viceroys—held that it was within his power utterly to destroy Congress. " My own belief," he wrote, " is that the Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise."

It soon became obvious to Gandhi that South Africa—from which, as he sat shivering through the night in the fireless waiting-room of Pietermaritzburg station, he wished to flee at the earliest possible moment—was for the present time the true arena for his talents. If he was never again to live with his family in Kathiawar, the family must live with him in Natal or the Transvaal, and, therefore, he applied for six months' leave in his own country. In the middle of the hot weather of 1896 he set foot once more on Indian soil. No longer unduly conscious of his rank as a barrister

of the Inner Temple, no longer painfully solicitous for reconciliation with the Modh Bania caste, no longer concerned whether or not litigation in Kathiawar will provide him with lucrative employment, he thought only of bringing the plight of the Indian settlers to the knowledge of their countrymen; for it was not right that they should remain as ignorant of actual conditions as he himself had been when, immaculately dressed, he walked down the gangway at Durban harbour. He passed through Allahabad and called upon the editor of the *Pioneer*. The *Pioneer*, then under the control of the brothers Chesney, was indisputably the leading journal in India. To the brothers Chesney an Act of the Government of India was something like an Act of Providence. Where the *Statesman*, the *Englishman* and the *Times of India* indulged freely in criticism, the *Pioneer* adopted the attitude that " The Government has spoken . . ." and the rest was all approval. For this singular devotion the editor of the *Pioneer* was rewarded with rather more than the usual share of Government's confidence, and people from all parts of India read the *Pioneer* because it had become semi-officially, and of its own free will, the Government organ. The editor—with the accessibility which great editors in India have always shown—received Gandhi and heard him out. That he should agree with him and so run the risk of the slightest displeasure from Simla was more than anyone could expect. Gandhi was, however, permitted to write a letter to the *Pioneer*. That letter, after its publication, found its way to the news columns of the Natal journals. Gandhi made speeches, from which Reuter telegraphed extracts. As he moved leisurely through the beloved India, to which he had become almost a stranger, he was making a far greater stir in South Africa than he believed to be possible.

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Towards the end of 1896 Gandhi, with Kasturbai and their sons, sailed from Bombay on board the *Courland.* Another boat—the *Naderi*—had sailed a few days before from Porbandar, and both boats were expected to reach Durban at the same time. Between them they carried something like seven or eight hundred Indians, and their arrival could have been interpreted as an " invasion " of Durban. There had been " invasions " of Durban before; but now feeling was strong. So far, Lord Ripon's policy had not been reversed, and the Europeans of Natal were anxious to win the sympathies of Mr Joseph Chamberlain and the new Government. Perhaps even a scene would be necessary. The Committee of Europeans influenced the Government to prevent the Indians from landing, though the Immigration Restriction Act was not yet in force. The Government remembered the outbreak of the bubonic plague in India earlier in the year, and with this excuse, though there was not a single sufferer from an infectious disease on either the *Courland* or the *Naderi*, the passengers were detained outside the Durban harbour for more than three weeks. The Committee of Europeans, more direct and thorough than the Government, first threatened the shipowner—none other than Dada Abdullah Sheth—with loss of business if the *Courland* and the *Naderi* did not return with their full complement of passengers to India, and then sent word to the passengers themselves that, should they attempt to land, members of the European Committee would push every one of them into the sea. It was a preposterous threat; for while every single passenger was fully entitled to land, many of them were old residents of Natal, and others were merely passing through Natal on their way to the Transvaal. Realizing that the demonstration had gone too far, and might lead to unpleasant remonstrances and inquiries from the Colonial Office, the Government lifted the quarantine,

and the *Courland* and the *Naderi* sailed into the harbour. The passengers landed, but the Attorney-General of Natal, who knew that Gandhi, by his newspaper letters, pamphlets and speeches in India, was the chief cause of the Europeans' demonstration, begged him to remain on board the *Courland* until the evening. Unhappily, an English barrister, who was Dada Abdullah Sheth's advocate, came on board and dissuaded Gandhi from accepting the official advice. Gandhi, as usual, was made conspicuous by his dress. Almost immediately people in the main street were shouting: "Here's Gandhi! Thrash him!" Hooligans threw stones. The English barrister, scenting an ugly scene, beckoned for a rickshaw. The rickshaw and the Zulu rickshaw boy were at once surrounded by the hooligans, who threatened to destroy the rickshaw if the rickshaw boy attempted to give Gandhi a ride. "Kha!" shouted the Zulu, as he fled in terror from the main street. Gandhi was compelled, therefore, to descend from the deserted rickshaw and attempt once more to make his way through the main street. He was separated from the English barrister and severely kicked. He was about to faint, when the wife of the Superintendent of Police pushed her way through the crowd and, holding an umbrella over Gandhi's head, warded off a shower of stones. In this manner they walked together until a number of constables arrived, and took charge of the situation. After staying for a short time in the police station, a severely bruised man stepped quietly and, as he thought, unobserved into the house of a wealthy Indian merchant, Parsi Rustomji. His asylum was, however, discovered, and a few hours later a mob of several thousand stood outside Parsi Rustomji's house. The mob was intent upon lynching him, and it very nearly succeeded. Gandhi escaped from the house disguised as a policeman.

It was not possible that such an ugly incident should escape the notice of the authorities in London. In due course a cable arrived from Mr Joseph Chamberlain, asking the Government of Natal to prosecute Gandhi's assailants. The Attorney-General, not a little grieved that Gandhi had not followed his advice to remain on board the *Courland* until nightfall, sent for him and told him that the Government would prosecute his assailants without further delay. But to this Gandhi would not agree. "If all they heard about me was true," he said, "it was natural for them to be excited and do something wrong." He had moved far since his threat to prosecute the Political Agent at Rajkot. The Attorney-General was, of course, relieved; for, though he believed in the strict maintenance of law and order, he had not concealed his sympathy with the Committee of Europeans during the prolonged quarantine of the *Courland* and the *Naderi*. Gandhi's refusal to prosecute removed yet another occasion for inflamed feeling between Europeans and Indians. The Attorney-General then handed Gandhi a blank piece of paper, on which he was to state that, on his own responsibility, he refused to prosecute his assailants; and when this was done, the Attorney-General forwarded it dutifully to the Colonial Office. The Attorney-General had begun to understand, and even to like, the detested Gandhi. The mind of Mr Chamberlain, however, was less impressionable. The blank paper might as well have remained a *tabula rasa*.

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The English and the Boers drifted into war. With war came a great challenge to the Indian community. They had no cause to feel grateful to the Boers of the Transvaal, but they could not pretend that they were more grateful to the English of Natal. Ever since their first arrival at

Durban in 1860 they had attempted to batten upon an alien country. They had never shown that they were proud of their British citizenship, and Boer and British leaders alike assumed that the Indians would stand idly by and wait to see who won the war. Indian sympathies were with the Boers rather than the British. The Boers were fighting for their national identity. Were Indians, themselves oppressed, to assist in oppressing others? This question had to be answered, and the answer came naturally from Gandhi. He had fashioned the Natal Indian Congress on the model of the Indian National Congress. He would now emulate its thought, and he was certainly not to quarrel with Subramania Aiyar's inaugural discovery that " the domination of the great British Power " had been accomplished by " a merciful dispensation of Providence." The way of co-operation was the way of success. He, therefore, told his community: " Our existence in South Africa is only in our capacity as British subjects. In every memorial we have presented, we have asserted our rights as such. We have been proud of our British citizenship, or have given our rulers and the world to believe that we are proud. Our rulers profess to safeguard our rights because we are British subjects, and what little rights we still retain, we retain because we are British subjects. It would be unbecoming to our dignity as a nation to look on with folded hands at a time when ruin stared the British in the face as well as ourselves, simply because they ill-treat us here. And such criminal inaction could only aggravate our difficulties. . . . If we desire to win our freedom and achieve our welfare as members of the British Empire, here is a golden opportunity for us to do so by helping the British in the war by all means at our disposal. It must largely be conceded that justice is on the side of the Boers . . . but so long as the subjects own allegiance to a State, it is their clear duty

generally to accommodate themselves, and to accord their support to acts of the State."

Gandhi won his way. The Indian community would co-operate. But how? They were not wanted. This was a war between white and white—a war to be fought over the heads of Indians and Bantus, who nevertheless suffered in the process. Gandhi, however, did not abandon the hope of co-operation, and realizing that even stretcher-work by non-combatants required a careful training, he organized his volunteers. He had them all medically examined. The leaders learned how to nurse the wounded. Onlookers laughed at the activities of the "coolies"; but when Gandhi assured the Government that he now had a body of efficiently trained men under his leadership, the Government could not decline his offer without expressing its gratitude and appreciation. Victory failed to come speedily to British arms, and for a time there was a fear that Durban itself might one day fall to the Boers; and then, in answer to one of Gandhi's persistent offers of help, the Government announced its approval of the formation of an Indian Ambulance Corps. Gandhi—future arch-priest of pacifism—wore khaki.

Eleven hundred Indians left Durban for the "front." A long series of British reverses brought them frequently into the firing-line. Sometimes they worked side by side with members of the European ambulance corps, and there Gandhi met some of his principal European accusers; but he was never once insulted—1914 did not provide the only war in which men of different races and creeds responded to "the comradeship of the trenches." General Buller mentioned Gandhi and his co-workers in dispatches, and when the war was over he and thirty-six other Indians received war medals.

Co-operation was better than resistance. Gandhi had managed to impress the European combatants, and now

that victory had come to the English, it was, it seemed, a foregone conclusion that the old evils against which the Indian community formerly contended—virtual disfranchisement and the three-pound registration tax—would disappear. Gandhi had reached the age of thirty-two. He had lived in South Africa long enough to feel his affections rooted in the country. He had travelled far, both as a politician and as a moral reformer. He discovered that simplicity of life helped him to capture happiness, but he was making that discovery when, as a home-sick youth in London, he returned his violin and closed for the last time the pages of Bell's *Standard Elocutionist*. A more significant discovery was his power of leadership. Men of all parties were glad to follow him. He—a " coolie " barrister—had become a leading figure in Natal, and if he could accomplish so much in a Crown Colony, what could he not accomplish in India? There were glittering prizes. He had earned at the Durban Bar more than he needed. He could now earn still more at the Bombay Bar, where eight years before he had been a pitiable failure. Moreover, the opportunities for social service seemed to be immeasurably greater, now that the Boers were defeated and the British had gained the opportunity of sweeping away the anti-Indian legislation of the Transvaal. Great men stalked through India, and Gandhi had met them when, in 1896, he first proclaimed in India the disabilities of his countrymen in South Africa. There was Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the Bombay philanthropist who, years ago, sent word that Gandhi was on no account to prosecute the Political Agent at Rajkot. There was Lokamanya Tilak, the great Brahman whose violent views and policies were to lead him into a profitless legal controversy with the *Times* and Sir Valentine Chirol, and there was Gopalrao Krishna Gokhale, who as the chief inspirer of the Servants of India Society must be

numbered among the creators of modern India. Each of them would have been more than willing to accept Gandhi as a lieutenant. And finally, there was the call of home, to which Kasturbai and her children were far from indifferent. In Natal, as in the Transvaal, it was never possible to escape the fact that the Indians were a despised and unwanted race. If this feeling exists in India it is because prolonged agitation and propaganda have made the people hypersensitive. Thirty years ago there was less resentment against, and actually less personal contact with, Englishmen; and when Gandhi and his family at last departed from Durban they settled down in Bombay for a life of comparative ease. Gandhi's reputation removed all fear of a struggle at the Bombay Bar, and his earnings have been variously estimated from three to six thousand pounds a year. But life was soon to lose its smoothness. Almost within a year there came warnings that all was not well in South Africa. Later a message announced that Mr Chamberlain was about to pay an official visit to South Africa. It was imperative that the Indians should present their case to him and make their difficulties clear. It was a call for leadership, and Gandhi accepted with alacrity the suggestion that he should return to Durban. Moreover, it meant that for the first time he would meet a British statesman face to face. The member for a Birmingham division who repeatedly declared that we must "think imperially or perish" need not have been far removed in sympathy and vision from the Indian leader who, on the eve of the Great War, declared: "It is my knowledge, right or wrong, of the British Constitution which binds me to the Empire. Tear that Constitution to shreds, and my loyalty also will be torn to shreds. Keep that Constitution intact, and you hold me bound—a slave to that Constitution."

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The man who told his generation that it must think imperially or perish was, none the less, apt to think in terms of Whitehall and his Birmingham constituency. He received Gandhi almost as soon as he had arrived at Durban, and he listened patiently to all that the Indian leader—himself a little out of touch with events since his residence in Bombay—had to say. There was not the slightest indication that Mr Chamberlain ever remembered the man who declined to prosecute his assailants when they attempted to lynch him. Gandhi told his story; a few courteous words were exchanged, and when the Indian had left Mr Chamberlain turned swiftly to other and more pressing work. Meanwhile Gandhi made preparations to leave for Pretoria, so that he might once again meet Mr Chamberlain and acquaint him with the difficulties of the Indians in the Transvaal.

To Englishmen and Indians alike the Transvaal, now that the power of the Boers was broken, appeared as a promised land. Farmers, prospectors and company promoters clamoured for entry, and it was just and necessary that the authorities should regulate the immigrations. Two departments were set up—one for Europeans and the other for Asiatics. Europeans entered with comparative ease. Asiatics, of whom the greater number were Indians, while a few were Chinese, could scarcely effect an entry at all. The reason was, of course, obvious. Unlike Natal, the Transvaal could not claim Indians of the third generation. Barely twenty years had passed since the first Indian set up his shop in the main street of Pretoria. The Orange Free State had ruthlessly expelled all but a few Indian waiters, and even if there was no intention of following the example of the Orange Free State, the Transvaal had at least some excuse for deciding upon a sound Indian policy before it admitted new immigrants. In the language of post-War

Europe, it would have been justified in devising a quota system. Gandhi has never acknowledged this point of view. He recalled again and again the assurances of Lord Lansdowne and Lord Selborne that the ill-treatment of Indians was one of the causes of war against the Transvaal. The British Agent in Pretoria had frequently hinted that once the Transvaal became a Crown Colony it would be a land fit for Indians to live in; and here was a new Asiatic Department regulating the movements of Indians, and bringing to their work a quality that the Boer rulers admired but did not adopt—the quality of efficiency. It was even difficult for Gandhi to enter the Transvaal for his interview with Mr Chamberlain, and his only method of reaching Pretoria was to take with him a letter from the Police Commissioner in Durban. Many of the members of the Asiatic Department were now recruited from India and Ceylon, and these, while they could not yet claim a sound knowledge of conditions in the Transvaal, nevertheless had their own notions of " treating the Oriental as he should be treated "; and when the Chief of the Department found that Gandhi was in Pretoria, planning to meet Mr Chamberlain, he sent for him.

" What brings you here? " he asked.

" I am here at the request of my fellow-countrymen," was the reply.

" You must go back. You shall not wait on Mr Chamberlain. It is for the protection of the Indians here that the Asiatic Department has been specially formed."

" What are we here for? " the Chief asked of other Indians in Gandhi's absence. " Have we not been appointed to protect you? What can Gandhi know of the conditions here? "

The Chief then wrote a letter in which he stated that, since Gandhi had seen Mr Chamberlain in Durban, it was

necessary to exclude his name from the Transvaal deputation. None the less, Mr Chamberlain must have become aware of the resentment among all classes of the Indian community, for when he received the Indian deputation he referred to Gandhi's absence: "Rather than hear the same representative over and over again, is it not better to have someone new?"

Gandhi was discovering his chief enemy. It was the bureaucrat. Bureaucracy made the path of co-operation exceedingly difficult to follow. But is the elimination of bureaucracy possible without a complete transformation of society?

CHAPTER SIX

Renunciation

Mr Gandhi abandoned all thought of returning to Bombay. His failure to see Mr Chamberlain during his tour of the Transvaal emphasized his real leadership, deepened the community's sense of grievance, and foreshadowed a profitable field of agitation in the years to come. Plainly, the British Government had forgotten—perhaps Lord Lansdowne and Lord Selborne themselves had forgotten—that Kruger's treatment of the Indians was one of the causes of Britain's war upon the Transvaal. There was no need for Mr Gandhi to lack money. He could practise both at the Natal Bar and at the Transvaal Bar. He could—and did—double the income he was formerly earning at the Bombay Bar. As a proof that he had come finally to live among the Indians of South Africa, he summoned Kasturbai and her children; and Kasturbai, reconciled to the idiosyncrasies of her lord, broke up her Bombay home and came, to live she knew not where or how. On the voyage out to Natal, her children scampered all over the deck, and one of them severely injured his arm. A member of the crew put it in a sling, and trusted nature to take its course. But when the father—still faultlessly attired—met his family at Durban, and saw what a white man had done to his child's arm, he promptly altered the treatment. The sling was thrown away and the arm put into a mud-plaster. The " medical morals " of a seafaring European were not for him. The son is still alive.

In Johannesburg Mr Gandhi's office grew in size and importance. He was soon employing a small army of clerks, and even European lady typists. Each of these lady typists,

however, had pronounced sympathies with some or all of his views. Some liked his championship of the depressed Indians; others his vegetarianism. They were all prepared to work more or less for nothing, and if they ever failed to be efficient they had at least this excuse, that their master hated the efficiency of the new administration of the Transvaal, and would recall almost affectionately the days when the Boers introduced harsh laws and then forgot to carry them out. There was no lax administration now. Lord Milner's young men were first-class bureaucrats, who gave to the Transvaal all the benefits of well-regulated administration and sound organization. There was little to impede their progress—no very cumbrous Parliamentary machinery or factious public opinion to curb the methods of good government. It was as though the dream of the civil servant in Whitehall had come true, and Downing Street and the Palace of Westminster sank overnight below the level of the Thames. Some of Lord Milner's lieutenants foresaw with perfect accuracy the dangers of admitting new Indians to the Transvaal before the State had finally decided whether or not it could assimilate a larger Oriental population. They knew that, if fresh immigration was to be stopped, there must be an effective registration of the old Indians. They therefore proposed that the Transvaal Government should issue permits containing the photograph and the signature of the holder. Illiterate Indians—of whom there was an extremely large number, even in the Transvaal—were to give their thumb impressions. It was a reasonable suggestion, and the Government seems to have adopted it with alacrity. None the less, it brought members of the Asiatic Department into a public contempt that should have been reserved for the politicians, who argued plausibly about the difficulties of reconciling Oriental and Occidental aspirations, instead of following

the example of the Orange Free State and excluding Indians with the rigidity that the Lama used to exclude Europeans from Thibet. As bureaucrats, members of the Asiatic Department were set the task of circumventing would-be intruders into the Transvaal, and they fulfilled their task in a truly bureaucratic and efficient manner. But it was a manner no Indian could welcome. Mr Gandhi, during the Boer War, had encouraged the Indians to believe that British citizenship spelt freedom. How could the registration ordinance be considered compatible with freedom? Many years were to pass before war-time England reconciled itself to national registration, and before only rigidly defined quotas of European nationals could sail past the Statue of Liberty into God's own country. It is not easy to recapture the asperities of the Indians who were forced to register themselves thirty years ago. We have all been regimented since, and Englishmen are apt nowadays to behave like the German Communists before the Nazi *régime*, who, when their meeting in a public park was broken up by a police charge, fell over each other as they rushed along the paths. They would have found greater safety in running over the grass; but then, even walking on the grass is *verboten*. Indian leaders jeeringly remarked that England was supposed to be a free country. A former Prince Galitzin also jeered when, despairing of enlightenment in Russia, he arrived at Dover with his tame crocodile, and found that, though he, as a political agitator, could enter free England without any difficulties, he must nevertheless pay a fifteen-shillings custom duty on his tame crocodile.

The Indian community looked to Mr Gandhi to lead the agitation. This he did with a skill which any Parliamentary leader in England might have envied. And yet nothing could persuade him to abandon his policy of

co-operation. At a time when victory for the British was by no means a certainty, he had urged Indians to be faithful to their British citizenship. His reward had been a war medal, followed by a snub from Mr Chamberlain. The reward of the community had been the exchange of anti-Indian laws laxly administered for fresh anti-Indian laws rigorously enforced. Yet Mr Gandhi's reputation stood high, and after attacking the Government in splendid Parliamentary fashion, and after leading one deputation after another, he called upon the Indian community in the Transvaal voluntarily to re-register. Thereby he hoped to soften action by the Government. For a time it seemed as though he had succeeded. Efficiency and imagination, however, are seldom given in equal proportions, and before long the Government decided to give to this voluntary registration the force of a legislative enactment.

In the interval, Mr Gandhi was busy at the Bar. He became one of the most familiar figures in Johannesburg, as he cycled from the Court to his favourite vegetarian restaurant, and from the restaurant to the "coolie location," where the white residents of Johannesburg forced the Indians to live. In almost all respects the "coolie location" resembled the ghetto of a medieval city. Illiterate Indians knew not the first principles of sanitation or health, though Mr Gandhi gave frequent lectures, in which he mixed indispensable advice with his own doctrines of diet and treatment. The "coolies" expectorated freely. They were, as their white rulers ceaselessly declared them to be, rather dirty and uncivilized, and when the pneumonic plague broke out among Zulus working in a gold mine near Johannesburg, Indian workers in the same mine quickly caught the plague. They returned to the location, which within only a few hours was plague-stricken. Terrorized inhabitants sent for Mr Gandhi, who

cycled at full speed to the location, warned the Town Clerk, and summoned a doctor and a nurse. He broke open an empty house, and placed twenty-three sufferers within it. On the following day he found an empty shed, which he cleaned and converted into a temporary hospital. Here twenty of the twenty-three sufferers died. The nurse also died.

It was one thing to treat new sufferers, and another to stamp out the plague. There was a daily exodus from Johannesburg of European women and children, and the Municipality, seeing that it was Mr Gandhi's initiative which prevented what might have been a decimation of the city, encouraged his further proposals; for almost immediately he was marching the Indians out of the location to a spot where the Municipality had erected tents for them. The entire location was burned down, and, until new accommodation was provided, the Indian community of Johannesburg lived under canvas. The days of plague enhanced Mr Gandhi's prestige in the city. It was too good an opportunity for him to miss, for when he wrote a letter to the Press condemning the Municipality's accommodation for Indians, he had public opinion on his side.

Mr Gandhi's promptitude and courage during the plague brought him many new friendships—among them the important friendships of Mr West, a Lincolnshire man, and Mr Henry Polak, an English Jew. Mr Gandhi invited Mr West to go to Durban and supervise the printing of *Indian Opinion*, which, on the eve of the Boer War, Mr Gandhi had made the official organ of his Natal Indian Congress. Within a few hours Mr West accepted the invitation, threw up his job and thus became—apart from the lady typists—the first of Mr Gandhi's numerous European lieutenants. Mr Polak, a journalist, was a man not only susceptible to new ideas, but always ready to

translate new ideas into action. He lived in Johannesburg in almost religious isolation. Years later, when the former Lord Chief Justice of England went out to govern India, the Mayor of Bombay greeted the new Viceroy at the Apollo Bundar. The Mayor was Sir David Sassoon, a distinguished member of a Jewish family long associated with Mesopotamia and India. Sir David expressed his gratitude that a Jew should be the first man officially to welcome the first Jewish Viceroy. Lord Reading, in his reply, knowing full well that his first public speech would be broadcast from one Indian city to another, said that perhaps his Jewish ancestry and loyalties gave him a special insight into the spiritual and religious aspirations of India. Whether or not a Jew is peculiarly fitted to understand the Hindu and the Mohammedan, Mr Polak possessed a rare insight into the mind of Mr Gandhi. He understood him better than any of his Indian compatriots, and certainly better than the Quakers and the Plymouth Brother who once attempted to tutor him in the mysteries of the Christian religion. What was more, he divined the trend of Mr Gandhi's mind and recommended to this singularly little-read man the books that were bound to help him. It was when Mr Gandhi was about to make a journey from Johannesburg to Durban, where Mr West was struggling against the financial entanglements of *Indian Opinion*, that Mr Polak threw a copy of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* into the railway compartment. Mr Gandhi had a twenty-four-hours journey, and nothing to read save *Unto This Last*, and, as Mr Polak knew, once Mr Gandhi had taken the book up he could not put it down.

"My belief," wrote Gandhi, in his autobiography, "is that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why the book so captured me and made me transform my life. . . ."

" This is how I understood Ruskin's teachings:

1. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. A lawyer's labour has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their labour.
3. A life of labour—*i.e.* of the tiller of the soil and handicraftsman—is the life worth living.

" The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. Ruskin made it as clear as possible for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I awoke with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice."

So, journeying between Johannesburg and Durban had provided Mr Gandhi with a second spiritual Æneid.

The financial complications of *Indian Opinion* seemed to be a trivial affair to one who henceforward would hold his profession in no greater esteem than he would hold the trade of the barber, and who would dedicate himself to a life of labour. He had made a grand discovery, which he must reveal to Mr West before he began to talk about the position of *Indian Opinion*. Mr West refreshed his memory of *Unto This Last* and then showed himself ready to fall in with whatever proposals Mr Gandhi might choose to make. But what were the proposals to be? Mr Gandhi had a giant's work at the Transvaal Bar; he was the leader of Indians in two different States; he wrote for his newspaper; he lectured on vegetarianism, sanitation and diet; he had a wife and children. He was like a post-War bishop asking the world how he could give up his palace and his princely salary. Then, at last, Mr Gandhi and Mr West made a resolution. They would, at least, print *Indian Opinion* on a farm.

They soon found a farm at Phœnix, in the neighbourhood of Durban. It contained twenty acres of land. Mr Gandhi

and Mr West bought the twenty acres. Near it, however, was an estate of eighty acres containing a cottage and an abundance of fruit-trees. Mr Gandhi and Mr West bought this too. Both estates cost a thousand pounds. After all, Ruskin himself was a member of the wealthy classes. It then occurred to Mr Gandhi that a little economy should be shown. The people who were to live at Phœnix—and a number of Indians soon volunteered to live a simple and communal life—should build the shed for the printing-press themselves, and Parsi Rustomji provided second-hand corrugated-iron sheets. Mr Gandhi wanted a hand-press. Mr West, overruling all excesses in the Ruskinian philosophy, installed an engine. Nevertheless, Mr Gandhi ordered a hand-press, in case, he said, the engine broke down. And it so happened that the engine failed the Ruskinians on the very first day. Almost triumphantly Mr Gandhi and his friends fell back on the hand-press and worked through the night. Then someone woke up the engineer, to see if the engine would start again. " Machines," said Mr West, " sometimes seem to behave as though they required rest like us "; for, as the chief Ruskinian himself admitted, the engine started as though nothing had happened, and the whole press " rang with peals of joy." Mr West sang a hymn.

The simple life did not end with a printing-press on a not very accessible farm; for though Mr Gandhi did not abandon his practice at the Bar, nor cease all at once to be dressed in Savile Row fashion, he did at least take to doing his own laundry. He overstarched his high collar, and the starch peeled off while he was addressing a jury in the court. Later he cut his own hair, and so avoided the unpleasantness of barbers who might suddenly refuse to cut the hair of a " coolie." At first, neither his laundering nor his hair-cutting was a great success, and his appearance provoked loud laughter among his fellow-barristers; but they were

laughing with him, rather than at him, and they mingled their laughter with pity for a man prone to indignities because racially he belonged to the unwanted illiterates of the location.

Before long Mr Polak came to live with Mr Gandhi in Johannesburg, as a member of his household. Mr Polak was engaged to an English girl, and Mr Gandhi insisted that she, too, when she arrived at Johannesburg and was married, should join the household—a decision which caused the gravest concern to Kasturbai, who was shy, had seldom met an Englishwoman socially, and spoke only a few words of English. Mr Polak and Mr Gandhi met the bride-to-be at Jeppe station, Johannesburg, and later in the day conducted her to the office of the Registrar of Marriages. The Registrar gazed at Mr Gandhi and then at Mr Polak and his *fiancée*. He drew Mr Gandhi aside. The marriage, he explained, could not take place. The law forbade the marriage of a European to an Asiatic. It was inconceivable that a thoroughbred European should have asked an Asiatic to be his best man. The Registrar was adamant. Mr Gandhi thereupon appealed to the Chief Magistrate, with whom fortunately he had once read the *Gita* and other Hindu scriptures. The Chief Magistrate shared the Registrar's fear of heavy penalties for committing a mistake, but, as he remembered that Mr Polak had a father whose skin was almost Nordic, he officiated in the place of the Registrar, and thus both the lawfulness and the respectability of the union were assured.

The marriage over, Mr Gandhi felt it to be his duty to give an at-home in honour of Mr and Mrs Polak. He looked round the walls of his inexpensive, middle-class house, and decided that such an occasion demanded an increase of furniture, which he ordered. He felt, as his brother had felt when a barrister of the Inner Temple was about to return to Kathiawar, that he must replenish the

household crockery; and when a Gujerati youth suggested that he might whitewash the ceilings, Mr Gandhi readily consented. Unfortunately, the host walked into the reception-room to find that the Gujerati youth had whitewashed the wall-paper as well. He sent at once for a decorator, and ordered the walls to be re-papered. The ways of the Transvaal, however, are leisurely, and the decorator had not finished his work, nor had the new furniture been installed, before the visitors began to arrive, and even a saint anxious for a decorator to begone must fret.

The experiment of English and Indians living *en famille* has often been attempted, and has as often failed. But the Gandhis and the Polaks have consistently maintained that they were happy together. "I do not remember," Mr Gandhi wrote, "our ever having had a difference with the newly married couple, but even if Mrs Polak and my wife had had some unpleasant experiences, they would have been no more than what happen in the best-regulated homogeneous families." Differences there certainly were, but they were natural differences of temperament and outlook. Mr Gandhi's desire for simplicity led him once again to convert his middle-class dwelling into a succession of bare garrets, and Mrs Polak needed curtains and floor-coverings. "But why?" asked Mr Gandhi. "Is not the country that you can see from your windows more beautiful than any picture? You have said you love sky scenes and beautiful sunsets. There you have it all in front of you. I do not understand why you want to shut it out with curtains." "Some lace curtains or thin muslin will not shut it out," Mrs Polak replied, and, since she is a capable woman, she won her way. Kasturbai Gandhi herself protested that English people, amused by the mixed *ménage*, had a habit of inviting themselves to dinner and then asking their host some very direct questions. She had no

wish to welcome people who, she said, "make laugh" of her.

Again, the Polaks differed profoundly from the Gandhis in their ideas of education. The Gandhi children were growing up with but a scant knowledge of English. A few lessons from their father sufficed for their mental training. The barrister of the Inner Temple, who even now relied upon English friends for inspiration, refused to see that he was denying his children their birthright. Yet Mr Gandhi himself was in a process of education. He was moving from a Ruskinian simplicity to an almost Antonian austerity. Lace curtains and thin muslin took on the texture of a steel frame that held him down. Family ties checked him less in his work than in his quest for spiritual self-realization. He was not yet thirty-five. He had reached an age when many Englishmen have decided whether or not marriage is a fit state for them to enter. Mr Gandhi, if he had been given an English upbringing, would have undoubtedly chosen the unmarried state. Yet in actual fact he had been married for more than twenty years. Kasturbai had honoured and obeyed him. She had wandered from Kathiawar to Bombay and from Bombay to Johannesburg at his bidding. She endeavoured to follow his teachings; but there were occasions when she failed her instructor. When, for instance, an Indian Christian—a convert from the Untouchables—came to stay with her husband, and her husband peremptorily ordered her to clear the slops of the ex-Untouchable, pride and the instinct of her ancient religion made her rebel. Her eyes were red with anger as she descended the stairs with the slop-pail.

Mr West struggled with the production of *Indian Opinion* on the Phœnix Farm, where the sun beat upon the corrugated-iron sheets given by old Parsi Rustomji. He had gathered around him a number of English and Indian

settlers anxious to live their lives on true Ruskinian principles. Their life was a perpetual temptation to Mr Gandhi, and one day he forsook the little house with its lace curtains and thin muslin, and arrived at Phœnix with Kasturbai and Henry and Millie Polak. There was not the slightest adornment, though Mr Gandhi's bungalow seemed to possess rather more corrugated-iron sheets than the others. Mrs Gandhi and Mrs Polak shared a so-called bedroom, and on the first night they both grumbled so long and heartily that, at length, Mr Gandhi walked into the room and promised to make whatever improvements were really necessary. But, as Mrs Polak admitted in her biographical study of Mr Gandhi, there was always an emphasis on the word " necessary "; " for so many things we desired we could not prove to be necessary, and so life at Phœnix was lived in a very simple way ".

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Suddenly the cry of war was heard once more in South Africa. A Zulu chief refused to pay a tax recently imposed upon the Zulus. He called upon his men to follow his example, and a sergeant who arrived to collect the tax was struck down. The incident led to hostilities grandiloquently called the Zulu Rebellion. This rebellion, like the Boer War, was a challenge to the Indians of South Africa, more particularly to the Indians of Natal. Once again Mr Gandhi took little time in making up his mind. He was, he argued, a citizen of Natal, and therefore a citizen of the British Empire, which " existed for the welfare of the world." Almost immediately, he wrote to the Governor and offered to form an Indian stretcher-bearer company. The Governor accepted the offer. For the second time in his life, Mr Gandhi donned khaki: he was given the temporary rank of sergeant-major.

The medical officer in charge of the wounded Zulus

welcomed Sergeant-Major Gandhi on his arrival. He had found that white ambulance men were unwilling to nurse the Zulus. Few of the Zulus were wounded in battle. They had been captured and sentenced to be flogged, and the flogging created sores which were festering. Contact with these creatures, whom other men might have left to die, brought to Mr Gandhi a fresh realization of the horrors of war. He decided that the Zulu Rebellion was " no war, but a man hunt." Englishmen, he found, shared his views. Morning after morning rifles would be turned on innocent people; kraal after kraal burst into flame; and " friendly " Zulus were wounded almost as often as " enemy " Zulus. The rebellion should have made the future arch-apostle of non-violence an ardent opponent of war. But other thoughts were uppermost in his mind, and they were moving on their accustomed course to greater asceticism. Suppose, he argued, his wife were now to have another child; such an event would have made impossible his second appearance as a sergeant-major. It was clear that he must stop having children. This meant for him absolute chastity. He must take the vow of chastity, which he called *Brahmacharya* ; and when the ambulance corps was disbanded, and he relinquished the temporary rank of sergeant-major and gained one more war medal, he returned to Phœnix and discussed the benefit of *Brahmacharya* with Mr West and other members of the communal farm. His mind was made up.

The vow was taken. Mr Gandhi felt immeasurably happier. The stain of lust in the presence of death at Kathiawar was at last wiped out. Mr Gandhi turned with relief to new methods of healing. He wanted dearly to establish a house of healing at Phœnix. Not long afterwards Kasturbai, who suffered frequently from pernicious anæmia, grew worse and became unconscious. The doctor rang through to Johannesburg, where Mr Gandhi was staying,

and asked for the husband's permission to give his patient beef-tea. Mr Gandhi refused to give this permission, and took the next train to Durban, where, on his arrival at the doctor's house, he was informed that Mrs Gandhi had been given beef-tea even before the telephone call. Mr Gandhi took the news badly. The doctor and his wife, he tells us, had "laid me under a debt of gratitude, but I was not prepared to put up with his medical morals." Even if it meant her death, Mrs Gandhi was not to be given beef-tea without her consent. Kasturbai, though in the weakest condition, was roused so that she might tell her agonized husband whether or not she would consent to take beef-tea. "I will not take beef-tea," she cried. "It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being; and I would rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations." Mr Gandhi was delighted: the doctor called him callous. And because Kasturbai was not to have beef-tea, the doctor would not have her under his roof for a single day. Ill as she was, she had to be removed from Durban to Phœnix. "I shouldn't be surprised if she died on the way," were the doctor's parting words.

But she did not die. The husband gave her hydropathic treatment, and she began to gain strength. She would have recovered completely if the operation had succeeded in removing the hæmorrhage. The hæmorrhage, alas, was as obstinate as before. Mr Gandhi, not knowing what to do, dived into his books on vegetarianism. There he found that a *Brahmachari* gained by a saltless diet. He also learned that weak people should avoid pulses. If a saltless diet makes the pure purer, and a pulseless diet makes the weak strong, why should not Kasturbai give up salt and pulses? This was more than Kasturbai could bear to do, until her husband vowed that he also, for a year, would eat no salt or pulses. Oddly enough, the experiment worked. The

hæmorrhage disappeared and, said Mr Gandhi, "I added somewhat to my reputation as a quack." But the doctor seems never to have abandoned his curious faith in the efficacy of beef-tea. As Mr Gandhi had vowed himself to a saltless and pulseless diet for a whole year, it was only to be expected that he would inflict the same unattractive discipline upon his followers. We have his assurance that the results were good. "Medically there may be two opinions as to its value, but morally I have no doubt that all self-denial is good for the soul."

This new reputation as a quack brought Mr Gandhi more than one unofficial patient. There was an Englishman condemned to an immediate operation for appendicitis, and his friends—with a suspicion of the surgical knife that has long since passed out of fashion—came hurrying to Mr Gandhi. Shortly afterwards one of them carried the suffering man on his back. The patient was douched and made to fast. As soon as the crisis was over, Mr Gandhi put him on a light meatless diet, and he soon made a recovery. He has remained a vegetarian ever since.

Mr Gandhi's experiments, however, did not meet with uniform success. On one unhappy occasion he decided to experiment on Mrs Polak's baby, when it was only six weeks old. He placed one of his favourite cold mud-plasters on the child's abdomen to assist in regulating its natural functions. "The child," wrote the mother, "screamed and doubled up at the shock, then turned blue and grew stiff. I tore the plaster off and warmed the little body next to my own, and, fortunately, the child soon recovered." Even Mr Gandhi's experiments in vegetarianism were occasional failures, for in Johannesburg the Polaks had permitted their household the luxury of a dog, and Mr Gandhi was naturally anxious that it should be fed on a strictly vegetarian diet. The dog grew large and strong. He was a

magnificent tribute to vegetarianism, and he might well have been exhibited as a vegetarian trophy, if angry neighbours had not called to declare that the dog which for weeks past had been raiding meat-safes was now tracked down and identified as the dog which belonged to the Polak household.

The restoration of one patient with hæmorrhage and of another with appendicitis might—despite other minor failures—encourage anyone to distrust the "medical morals" of the West. His distrust, however, was confirmed by his own experience at the operating-table. A simple operation —deemed imperative—was ordered for an Indian boy of twelve. The distracted parents would agree to the operation only provided that it was done at home, and that Mr Gandhi was actually present. But the child died on the operating-table, and Mr Gandhi, firmly believing that the surgeon had been unskilful and careless, left the house haunted with the conviction that he had witnessed the slaughter of an innocent. He became still more anxious to establish a house of healing on his farm at Phœnix.

It was not to be. Bigger issues were to claim his time and loyalty. Ever since he was brooding over the advantages of *Brahmacharya* and attending to the needs of wounded Zulus, he felt that Providence was preparing him for some special mission. Even in his choice of hymns, when Christians, Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsees and Jews met together for prayer at Phœnix, there was the same note of divine preparation. His favourite hymn, the favourite hymn of almost all his co-workers, became:

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on."

The call for which Mr Gandhi had been waiting came suddenly. The Transvaal Government had decided peremptorily to make of no avail the voluntary registration to which Mr Gandhi had persuaded his fellow-Indians to submit.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Satyagraha

THE Transvaal Government Gazette Extraordinary of 22nd August 1906 announced that every Indian, male or female, above the age of eight must apply to the Registrar of Asiatics for a certificate of registration. The Registrar was to take all finger and thumb impressions. Those who failed to comply with the law could be fined, imprisoned, or even deported. The certificate of registration was to be carried on the person, so that police officers in the public highway might inspect it whenever they wished to do so. The Indian, in other words, was to receive the treatment accorded in England to a convict released on licence. The Ordinance applied alike to the mendicant and the merchant whose wealth might outrun the wealth of his English and Boer rivals.

Leading Indians met together, under Mr Gandhi's chairmanship, and resolved to hold a public meeting in the old Empire Theatre in Johannesburg. At that meeting, which every Indian in Johannesburg, almost without exception, attended, an old Mohammedan, Sheth Haji Habib, rose to declare that, in the name of God, he would never submit to the Ordinance. He called upon his fellow-Indians to make the same declaration on oath. He gave a lead which Mr Gandhi, after some hesitation, followed, and that night the famous *Satyagraha* oath came into existence. Sheth Haji Habib was as good as his word; for, when the Indian leaders subsequently called on the Colonial Secretary of the Transvaal to explain what they intended to do, he shouted: " If any officer proceeds to take my wife's finger-prints, I warn you I shall not be able to

restrain myself. I shall kill him there and then and die myself." "But," said the Minister meekly, "the Government is reconsidering the clauses that relate to women"; and he gave a personal assurance that these clauses would be deleted.

The struggle was inevitable. Mr Gandhi must shape his weapons. The word he chose—first *sadagraha*, which he subsequently changed to *satyagraha*—showed that he intended something more definite than passive resistance, the favourite weapon of Dr Clifford and some of the non-militant suffragettes, who were diverting the attention of English-speaking people. *Satya*, which is Truth, implies Love. *Agraha*, which is firmness, supplies the substitute for force. Later on Mr Gandhi coined the equivalent of "Soul-Force"; for, he wrote, "if we are *satyagrahis* and offer *Satyagraha*, or 'Soul-Force,' believing ourselves to be strong, two clear results follow as a matter of course. By fostering the ideal of strength, we grow stronger and stronger ourselves, so that, with the increase in our strength, our *Satyagraha* becomes more and more effective. Secondly, while there is little scope for love in passive resistance, on the other hand love has its full place in *Satyagraha*. Not only is hatred excluded, but it is a positive breach of the ruling principle of *Satyagraha* to have anything to do with violence or hate.

"Jesus Christ has been hailed as the Prince of passive resisters; but I submit that in His case, passive resistance must mean *Satyagraha*."

From the Transvaal Government, Mr Gandhi expected little sympathy. He decided to appeal direct to Whitehall. The days of the Salisbury and Balfour *régime* had ended at last, and in their place were the successors of Rosebery and Ripon. Lord Elgin was the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Mr John Morley was the Secretary of State for

India. The Secretary of State for India had saturated his mind in the writings of John Stuart Mill: so had Tej Bahadur Sapru, Motilal Nehru and other Indians struggling for wealth and fame at the Bar. John Morley had written studies of Rousseau and the *philosophes*, which young Indians read eagerly. Who could doubt—now that his colleagues were wishing him success at the India Office—that he would help India to Parliamentary self-government, or that he would lend a sympathetic ear to the particular grievances of Indians in the Transvaal? The Indians who at the old Empire Theatre solemnly swore before God that they would resist the " Black " Ordinance were more than willing to append their signatures to a written declaration; and, armed with this declaration, Mr Gandhi sailed for London, in the company of a Mohammedan representative, Mr H. O. Ali.

London in 1906—when dandies entertained lavishly at Gatti's, when Sarah Bernhardt made spectacular appearances at the Coliseum and Louis Napoleon Parker was busily producing his historical pageants in small county towns—was far less grim than when Mr Gandhi first knew it in the year of the Queen's Jubilee. There was more heartiness and less solemnity, more accessibility and less earnestness. No doubt, Mr Gandhi was surprised by the ease with which he could approach Mr Morley and Lord Elgin. Members of Parliament were pleased to see him. Mr John Redmond was affable, if non-committal. Mr Gandhi, for his part, did all he could to please. He walked through the streets with majestic ease in the familiar top-hat. The Edwardian period had created no distressing revolution in headgear; for it was only patrons of the turf —to whom Mr Gandhi obviously did not belong—who followed the example of their King and wore the Homburg hat. Mr Gandhi realized that the banquet was still *de*

rigueur for the inauguration of a movement, and accordingly he invited about a hundred guests to a luncheon. He could not, of course, provide them with meat or with wine. Nevertheless, the guests came, and they enjoyed themselves. Occasionally shyness overcame Mr Gandhi. The man who cut his own hair in Johannesburg, so as to avoid unpleasantness with barbers whose clientele was exclusively European, found himself embarrassed by a solicitous London hairdresser, who pressed him to purchase his favoured hair-restorer. Unwillingly Mr Gandhi grunted assent. The bottle of hair-restorer cost him two pounds. He kept it with him, so that he might present it to Mr Polak on his return to South Africa. Mrs Polak poured the contents of the bottle down the sink.

Within a few weeks Mr Gandhi left England, fully assured that Lord Elgin would disallow the " Black " Act; but the information which his friends gave him on his arrival in Cape Town shattered his hopes. The agent of the Transvaal did, indeed, advise Lord Elgin to disallow the " Black " Act, and, accordingly, Lord Elgin disallowed the Act. A few months later, however—on 1st January 1907—the Transvaal was to receive responsible government. Lord Elgin, therefore, informed the Agent, that while the " Black " Act could not be countenanced so long as the Transvaal was a Crown Colony, it would automatically receive the Royal Assent if it were passed by the Transvaal Legislature after the conferment of responsible government. Lord Elgin was right in law and in policy. In words which Gandhi was one day himself to approve, a self-governing State has the right to go to the devil in its own way. At the time, however, Mr Gandhi argued that Lord Elgin should have regarded the " Black " Act as " an improper piece of legislation "; " it was his clear duty privately to have warned Sir Richard Solomon that the

Transvaal could not enact such an iniquitous law even after responsible government had been given." In other words, Mr Gandhi did not believe in self-government without safeguards.

What happened was easy to predict. On New Year's Day, responsible government became an accomplished fact. The new Parliament was elected, and it soon met to pass the Budget. Then at a single sitting—on 21st March—it passed the " Black " Ordinance. Except for a necessary alteration in the date, the new Ordinance was a replica of the Ordinance which Lord Elgin had previously disallowed. There was no help from London now. " Self-government," said Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman on another occasion, " is better than good government." The Act was to come into operation on 1st July. That date, therefore, marked the inauguration of the *Satyagraha* movement. Its approval made the Government as well as the Indian community more apprehensive. But the resolution of the Indians became firmer, and when the few Chinese who were scattered over the Transvaal saw that they also, as Orientals, were subject to the " Black " Act, they joined issue with the Indians and became *satyagrahis* as well.

The 1st of July saw pickets standing outside the permit office, dissuading all who would enter and register their names, their finger-prints and thumb-prints. It was passive dissuasion. If an Indian insisted upon entering, he was not to be held back. If he wished to observe the law and yet feared the taunts of his compatriots who gathered outside the permit offices, he could ask for a volunteer to escort him to and from the registration centre. Several days passed, and the number of those who registered was exceedingly small. The Government tried encouragement. It agreed that Indians who feared the ridicule of their acquaintances should register in the privacy of their own

homes. But these methods could not be concealed from the volunteers, and the names of those who registered in secret were faithfully published in Mr Gandhi's newspaper, *Indian Opinion*. When the Asiatic Department could get no more than five hundred to register, out of an estimated population of thirteen thousand Indians, it decided to make a spectacular arrest. It arrested Pandit Rama Sundara, an insignificant resident of Germiston, who was sentenced to one month's simple imprisonment. The Government was perplexed, and knew not how to deal with its prisoner. He was given a cell in the European ward. Friends had freedom of access to him. He ordered whatever food he chose. He was hailed as a martyr on his release and then, because even the life of a privileged prisoner can be irksome, he fled the country. Leniency did not pay. It was necessary to punish the leaders; and Mr Gandhi, Mr Leung Quinn, the Chinese leader, and a few others were accordingly summoned to appear at the court in Johannesburg to show why, since they had refused to register, they should not be ordered to leave the Transvaal. The court was crowded. Mr Gandhi, who had earned as much as four thousand pounds a year defending Indians in this very court, stood with the other accused persons in the dock. The magistrate gave the order to quit the Transvaal, which was, of course, disobeyed. The leaders were, therefore, brought to the court once more, and were promptly sentenced not to simple imprisonment, but to periods of hard labour. Mr Gandhi was stripped naked and then given the clothes of a Zulu prisoner to wear. They were filthy. The number of prisoners increased rapidly and the wards were soon overcrowded. It was not until there had been endless negotiations that the authorities allowed the imprisoned *satyagrahis* even the use of a table, pens and ink, and books from the library. Mr Gandhi read an English

translation of the Koran, the speeches of Huxley, Carlyle's biographies and Bacon's *Essays*. He found that a Chinese Christian was anxious to learn English, and so he taught it him by reading well-known passages from the Bible. He and the Chinese Christian thought that they would like to attend the prison chapel, and asked for permission to do so. They met with a blunt refusal. The prison chapel, the Governor told them, was reserved exclusively for the white prisoners.

Suffering was not to be avoided. In his heart Mr Gandhi was too proud to endure with any happiness his walk to the station when he was being transferred from one prison to another. He walked before the gaoler. He wore a prisoner's garb with the convict's arrow. He carried his luggage—like other "coolies"—on his head. Occasionally, word reached the outside world that his sufferings were excessive, and, in a moment of sympathy, General Smuts sent him a couple of books on religious subjects. He witnessed many scenes that were abhorrent to him. There was one black night when he was told to sleep in a ward occupied by coarse-grained Chinese and Zulu prisoners. A Chinese and a Zulu made overtures to him, and because he would not heed them, they indulged in indecency regardless of his presence. Still worse were the physical hardships of *satyagrahis* who worked side by side with him, breaking stones and mending roads until the blisters on their hands oozed and comrades fainted from exhaustion. It was at his bidding that they courted imprisonment and, again at his bidding, that they endured the prison routine. Yet could he doubt that he was right? Mr Gandhi did his best to rise above the mental tortures of incarceration, and once, when he was taken from prison to give evidence in court, he asked leave to carry a book. He was manacled, and he was carrying the book, so the warder argued, to

conceal the handcuffs. His book was called *The Court of God is in the Mind.*

The *Satyagraha* movement impressed British and Boer opinion. It was achieving its object. The editor of the *Johannesburg Leader* made a personal appeal to General Smuts, whom he found anxious for a compromise. General Smuts proposed that Indians should register voluntarily and that, if the majority of Indians registered themselves, the Government would repeal the " Black " Act and legalize the voluntary registration. The editor of the *Leader* conferred with Indian spokesmen, who, however, promised nothing until Mr Gandhi had been released from gaol. The editor then received General Smuts' permission to see Mr Gandhi. Mr Gandhi read the General's document. He suggested one alteration, which was to reassure himself that the " Black " Act would be repealed, and announced that he would consider the proposals favourably. A few days later he was taken, while still a prisoner, to see General Smuts in Pretoria. General Smuts received him cordially. He was glad, he said, that the Indian people had remained firm even after the imprisonment of their leader. He promised to repeal the offending Act as soon as the majority had undergone registration, and then dismissed his visitor.

" Where am I to go? " asked the prisoner.

" You are free," said General Smuts.

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Perhaps for the first time in his life, Mr Gandhi had released forces that were difficult to control. He had so inflamed the minds of his compatriots that many of them were in no mood for compromise and peace. Some said that he had sold the community to General Smuts for fifteen thousand pounds. Where was the sense of denouncing the Government's order to take finger-prints and thumb-prints when Indians were now voluntarily to offer

finger-prints and thumb-prints? And who was to trust the Government? By no means all of them were reassured by Mr Gandhi's statement that a *satyagrahi* bids good-bye for ever to fear. "Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the *satyagrahi* is ready to trust him for the twenty-first time; for an implicit trust in human nature is his creed." The Pathans of the Transvaal remained convinced that Mr Gandhi had tricked them.

The day arrived when offices for voluntary registration were opened, and Mr Gandhi and other released prisoners resolved to head the list of voluntary registrators. On his way to the office, however, a number of Pathans, headed by Mir Alam, dealt Mr Gandhi a heavy blow on the head with cudgels, and he fell to the ground senseless. When he regained consciousness, Joseph Doke, a Baptist minister, was kneeling above him.

"Where is Mir Alam?" he asked.

"He has been arrested along with the rest."

"They must be released."

Onlookers carried Mr Gandhi into Mr Doke's house. The Registrar of Asiatics, who had been waiting for Mr Gandhi to head the list, called to say that he would leave a place vacant for him at the head of the list. But Mr Gandhi had pledged himself to take out the first certificate, and he therefore asked for the papers to be brought into the sickroom. This was done, and, while racked with pain, Mr Gandhi made an impression of his finger-prints and thumb-prints. Quiet and rest were imperative. Mr Gandhi would lie still and do nothing. But there was just one request he wished to make. Would Mr Doke's little daughter sing for him *Lead, kindly Light*?

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The conflict of Boer and British politics made it difficult for General Botha and General Smuts to follow a straight

course. For all the sympathy which the *Satyagraha* movement provoked, public opinion still clamoured for an effective system of registration. General Smuts bowed to the storm. The "Black" Act remained on the Statute Book. Those who had registered voluntarily were exempt from its operation. Others, who were old residents or new immigrants, were compelled to register according to the stipulations of the Act. The Pathans were right in their surmise, after all. They had suffered in vain, and the man who called upon them to suffer was the man who had made his peace with General Smuts. There was a danger of other attacks upon Mr Gandhi. Friends stood close to him, as though to guard him from danger, and when Mr Gandhi journeyed to Natal, and slept in the open at Phœnix, Jack Moodaley, a Tamil, whom neither coloured nor white boxers had beaten, slept near him. The pioneer *satyagrahi* felt safer in his company.

Action was imperative, if Mr Gandhi was to save the *Satyagraha* movement from complete ineffectuality. He therefore informed General Smuts that, unless the Asiatic Act was repealed in accordance with the terms of the settlement, within a specified period of time, he would call upon members of the Indian community publicly to burn their certificates. General Smuts called this statement an ultimatum, and his words were cheered in the Legislature, which passed the new Government Bill without a dissentient voice. "The people who have offered such a threat to the Government," said General Smuts, "have no idea of its power. I am sorry that some agitators are trying to inflame poor Indians who will be ruined if they succumb to their blandishments."

On 16th August 1908 almost every Indian in Johannesburg assembled in the grounds of the Haminia Mosque. On the platform stood an enormous cauldron. Certificates

from all those present were passed up to the platform. Mr Gandhi rose to ask whether anyone wanted his certificate back. " Burn them! Burn them! " cried the multitude. Then the certificates were thrown into the cauldron and saturated with paraffin. Flames shot up, and the whole audience rose to its feet. In a frenzy of excitement, Mir Alam rushed to the platform and confessed his sorrow for having hit Mr Gandhi with a cudgel. That evening the Johannesburg correspondent of the *Daily Mail* cabled a message in which he compared the conflagration to the Boston Tea Party. He was more prophetic than he knew.

Once more public opinion was sweeping General Smuts into an anti-Indian policy. The Indians already resident in the Transvaal were troublesome enough. The chances were that agitation would make them still more troublesome as time went on. It was necessary, therefore, not merely to restrict immigration, but to make it virtually impossible. The educated Indian had, it is true, to be treated with more consideration, and exceptions were made for those who could speak a European language. None the less, he was to be treated as a suspect; for is it not from the student class that the agitator is recruited? Gandhi himself was a conspicuous example of the indescribable folly of giving the Indian an English education. Most certainly the Indian immigrant who spoke English would be required to register and to observe the " Black " Act. With enthusiasm, therefore, the Legislature passed the Transvaal Immigrants' Restriction Bill. With a like enthusiasm the Indian community. responded to Mr Gandhi's call to offer *Satyagraha* to this measure in addition to the revision version of the " Black " Act. And when General Smuts heard what Mr Gandhi proposed to do, he lost his patience; the Indian leader was raising an entirely fresh point; his methods were simply " cunning."

As it happened, the new Immigrants' Restriction Bill could be easily defied. Mr Gandhi invited a Parsi youth—Sorabji Shapurji Adajania—to enter the Transvaal from Natal. Sorabji arrived at Volksrust, the frontier station, and promptly informed the Immigrants' Restriction Officer of what he intended to do. The officer knew not how to act. He had no instructions from Pretoria, and no warrant for the arrest of Sorabji, who reached Johannesburg without molestation. He then informed the Police Superintendent of Johannesburg that he intended to remain in the Transvaal and defy both the new Immigration Act and the " Black " Act. The reply came in the form of a summons. He was defended by Mr Gandhi, who convinced the magistrate that the summons was defective. Next day, however, Sorabji was ordered to leave the Transvaal within a week, and because he disobeyed the order he was sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labour. Very soon Mr Gandhi adopted a more ambitious plan. He persuaded a group of wealthy and influential Indian merchants in Natal to enter the Transvaal simultaneously. One of the group was Parsi Rustomji. The Parsi and his friends made an ostentatious entry into the Transvaal, which the Government could not ignore. They were arrested at Volksrust and ordered to leave the Transvaal within seven days. They disobeyed the order, were arrested at Pretoria and deported without trial. Whereupon they entered the Transvaal again, and were sentenced at Volksrust to three months' hard labour. Embittered by what was going on, Joseph Royappen, a Cambridge graduate, took up a basket of vegetables, and was thus arrested for hawking without a licence; and even the Imam—a man who lived a life of fastidious ease—took to hawking in the streets and received a sentence of four days' imprisonment with hard labour.

Deportation soon became a farce; for whenever *satya-*

grahis were deported to Natal or Portuguese East Africa, a little trouble and expense brought them back again into the Transvaal. More vigorous methods were necessary. Before long *satyagrahis* were taken—it appears quite illegally—to a waiting boat at Durban, and then shipped to Madras, where they were left to their own devices. A number of them were African-born Indians who had never before seen their motherland and were thus cut off from their families and friends. General Smuts was bent on "thoroughness"; and Mr Gandhi had been sent to Pretoria Gaol, where, he tells us, he was confined "in a solitary cell reserved for dangerous prisoners."

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While the *Satyagraha* movement followed a fitful course of storm and calm for more than a year, General Botha and General Smuts were planning the Union of South Africa. They contended against difficult forces. General Hertzog wanted separation. General Botha and General Smuts were content with what is now known, almost too familiarly, as Dominion Status. General Botha was going to London to confer with Lord Crewe, the Colonial Secretary, and other members of the Liberal Government. The Indians decided that they also should send representatives to London, and, accordingly, Mr Gandhi set out on his third visit to England. He was a celebrity now. Suffragettes and Non-conformist divines courted his acquaintanceship. He stayed in a reasonably comfortable hotel and regaled a long procession of visitors with fruit and vegetarian dishes. Members of the Government, however, made no pretence of help. South Africa was to win a virtual independence, and it was with the South African leaders that Mr Gandhi must treat. General Botha, using Lord Ampthill as his intermediary, did, indeed, promise to make many concessions to the Indian community; but the two measures

against which the *Satyagraha* movement was directed—the "Black" Act and the Immigration Act—he refused to repeal. Mr Gandhi's mission was a failure.

Yet, while in London, he came to know something of the forces that were to stir India to her depths. John Morley at the India Office forgot his radicalism, and yet introduced in India reforms that were one day to give radicalism full play. There were Indian anarchists in London who boasted openly of the activities they wished to commence in their own country. A struggle was coming. But, thought Mr Gandhi, if such a struggle is to come, why should not his compatriots adopt his own method of *Satyagraha*? Suppose *Satyagraha* was of universal application? His mind went off at a tangent, as it had done during the Zulu Rebellion. He should have spent his time—as the *Kildonan Castle* took him southwards to Capetown—preparing plans for a renewal of the struggle. Instead, he wrote *Hind Swaraj*, in which he showed how India was to gain her freedom by non-violent means.

The Union of South Africa came into existence. The first Governor-General bore the impressive name of Gladstone, and Indians in South Africa might have looked for help from Gladstone's son, as Indians in the mother-country had until recently looked for a daring leadership from Gladstone's biographer. But Lord Gladstone was a model Governor-General, and did not interfere with the policies of his Ministers.

The wives and children of imprisoned *satyagrahis* were often left stranded and destitute. There were no large funds at Mr Gandhi's command. It was necessary, however, to find accommodation for the penniless, and with the help of Hermann Kallenbach, a German who followed Polak and West, and threw himself into the *Satyagraha* movement, Mr Gandhi purchased a large farm some miles

from Johannesburg, which he promptly called Tolstoy Farm. It was run on lines similar to those of Phœnix, in Natal. Hindu and Mohammedan, Jew and Christian lived side by side. It gave Mr Gandhi peculiar delight to learn that they were scrupulously observing each other's fast-days. Yet it seems to have been a life of fast-days without feast-days; for Mr Gandhi forbade tea, coffee, sugar, jam and condiments. There was a particularly strongly worded prohibition against salt. Outwardly, the *satyagrahis* observed these strange monastic rules, and Mr Gandhi, hearing no words of complaint, praised the young men and women for their love of simplicity. He did not know that they waited until he had gone to bed, and then produced their tuck-boxes. It was one thing to follow Mr Gandhi's lead in a political struggle, but another to take his eccentric ideas about food at all seriously. Preparedness for suffering need not degenerate into a cult of the uncomfortable.

Mr Gandhi had not yet gone the full length of his asceticism. One day he read that cows in Calcutta had been brutally ill-treated in order to procure a larger quantity of milk. How could he be sure that the cow whose milk he was drinking had not been similarly ill-treated? He discussed the problem with Mr Kallenbach. In the end both agreed to abstain from drinking the milk of the cow. Mr Gandhi took a solemn vow, and then felt relieved. After all, cow's milk had stimulated the passions.

There were now at Tolstoy Farm a number of children, whom Mr Gandhi felt it his duty to educate. His eldest son was growing up and complaining loudly that he should receive the education to which his father's birth and position entitled him. Undeniably, Mr Gandhi's educational methods were far from perfect. He was not an impeccable disciplinarian. It is easier to offer *Satyagraha*—firmness combined with love—towards General Smuts than towards

an unruly schoolboy. In desperation, the preacher of non-violence once summoned Mr Polak to beat a boy. On another occasion he even struck a boy himself with a ruler, and the ordeal shook him and made him miserable. Sometimes relations between the young men and women were difficult, and when it came to his notice that a young woman—herself married—had seduced a boy several years younger than herself Mr Gandhi was inconsolable.

" Is there to be a baby? " asked Mrs Polak.

" No, thank God! At least that much is spared me."

The poor girl was made to fast, to take off all her jewellery, to put on a garb of mourning and to crop her hair. Mr Gandhi fasted with her. From the boy he extracted a promise that he would not marry for some years. And when Mr Gandhi had convinced himself that the girl was truly penitent, he begged Mrs Polak to see her. Mrs Polak was in no mood to greet a girl in the sincerity of whose penitence she did not believe. Moreover, she wondered how she could commence the conversation; but the girl was equal to the occasion, and with her opening remark began a severe lecture on Mrs Polak's weakness for tea-drinking.

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When General Smuts ordered the deportation of a number of *satyagrahis* to Madras, he committed himself to a very short-sighted policy, for their plight roused the pity of officials and the anger of their countrymen. Ill-treatment in South Africa was soon a national issue in India, and when Gokhale, the founder of the Servants of India Society, pleaded in the Legislature for the prohibition of further emigrations of Indian labourers under indenture, Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, gladly acceded to his request. Then Gokhale, at Mr Gandhi's special invitation, went out to South Africa, to study the problem for himself. He

was the first of the distinguished leaders in British India ever to visit South Africa, and John Morley and other members of Asquith's Cabinet were anxious that he should have a good reception. He travelled everywhere in the newly established Union of South Africa, and in Mr Gandhi's company. Towards the end of his tour he visited Pretoria, where for more than two hours he was closeted with General Botha and General Smuts. As he saw the situation, worse than the "Black" Act and the Immigration Act in the Transvaal was the £3 poll tax on indentured labourers in Natal. Upon completing his five-years indenture a labourer had either to pay a £3 poll tax or leave the country. Since, more often than not, a labourer could afford neither to pay the tax nor leave the country, he was forced to submit to a second period of indenture and so continue to live in semi-slavery. The Union made it possible to consider the Indian problem in South Africa comprehensively, and Gokhale sailed from Durban under the impression that General Botha and General Smuts would order the repeal of the £3 tax within a year, as well as the repeal of the "Black" Act and the Immigration Act.

Very soon, however, General Smuts discovered that the Europeans of Natal, already angered by India's determination to stop all new supplies of indentured labourers, would on no account agree to the repeal of the £3 poll tax. In the new Union Legislature it was, of course, possible to outvote the representatives from Natal; but for the moment General Smuts was unwilling to run risks with the loyalties that were supporting the Union and giving it life; and the £3 tax, in consequence, remained in force.

While Mr Gandhi was preparing more intensive forms of *Satyagraha* a new grievance came ready to hand. Mr Justice Searle, delivering a judgment with the utmost impartiality in the Cape Supreme Court, declared that all

marriages in South Africa that had not been celebrated according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages were null and void. According to the law of the Union, therefore, the wives of Hindus, Mohammedans and Parsis were concubines. It was an absurd position, and clearly Mr Gandhi should have appealed against the judgment, and then, if the appeal failed, he should have asked the Government for effective legislation. Instead, he wrote a vigorous letter to the Government, and in due course received an evasive and truly bureaucratic reply. The appeal, Mr Gandhi argued, could be prepared by the Government, or else by the Indian community, provided that the Government, through its Attorney-General, sided with it. The Government, however, was in no mood to yield immediately to the wild and even hysterical denunciations of the Searle Judgment, and since Mr Gandhi would not advise an appeal without Government encouragement, the Indians must offer *Satyagraha* on behalf of downtrodden wives. These wives, however, did not lack their own leaders ready to court imprisonment for their cause. Almost immediately a large band of women *satyagrahis* set out to defy the Government. Kasturbai Gandhi joined them. Women who lived on Tolstoy Farm defied the Government by entering Natal, and women who lived in Phœnix defied the Government by entering the Transvaal.

Both groups were arrested and imprisoned, with hard labour. The knowledge that women were enduring the same hardships as men provoked angry protests from India. For the first time Mr Gandhi learned how effective is the part of women in the armaments of agitation.

Satyagraha on behalf of the indentured labourers of Natal involved an immense accession of responsibility and strength. Hitherto—until the Searle judgment—*Satyagraha*

had been offered only in the Transvaal, where the Indians were all "free" and few in numbers. Now the great majority of Indians in South Africa were to be involved. Miners, hearing of the imprisonment of the women *satyagrahis*, threw down their tools at Newcastle, in Natal, and though Mr Gandhi had not yet prepared himself for this form of *Satyagraha*, he promptly hurried to Newcastle and placed himself at the head of the strikers. None of them were educated men. They had those personal habits and lack of the hygienic sense that had made them the butt of the civilized White in Natal for nearly sixty years. Yet, unable though they were to read the pages of *Indian Opinion*, they seemed thoroughly to understand the philosophy of *Satyagraha*. They gladly accepted Mr Gandhi's leadership. Mr Gandhi was without funds. But he dared to take this army—it was two thousand strong—across the border into the Transvaal. They would march by long and difficult stages until they reached Tolstoy Farm, and there they would stay until the Government ordered their arrest —or else repealed the £3 tax and rendered the Searle judgment innocuous.

The story of the great march has been often told. It is one of the chief epics of South African history. Weary and footsore, two thousand men and women arrive at the frontier and push past the little police cordon that was to ward them off. Two women take their babies with them on the march. One dies from exposure. The other falls from its mother's arms as she is crossing a brook and is drowned. But the mothers console each other. One of them said: "We must not pine for the dead, who will not come back to us for all our pining. It is the living for whom we must work." Night falls. The marchers are silent and falling asleep. An Englishman with a lantern in his hand approaches Mr Gandhi. "I have a warrant for your arrest,"

he says. The leader slips noiselessly away. There are others to take his place.

Few of Mr Gandhi's friends escaped the attentions of the Government. Mr Polak and Mr Kallenbach were both arrested, and as the marchers approached the railway line they found several carriages drawn up for their benefit. They were all under arrest. They had achieved their object.

Mr Gandhi was imprisoned in distant Bloemfontein, where there were no other Indian prisoners and where he was not to know how the *Satyagraha* movement progressed. He may have pictured to himself other prisons in Natal and the Transvaal filled with the miners who had gone on strike. But the South African Government decided upon a more drastic punishment. The strikers returned to the mines at Newcastle as prisoners. Round the mines' compounds was barbed wire. These compounds were officially declared to be outstations of the prisons at Dundee and Newcastle. The mine-owners' European staff became warders. For this drastic action the Government paid dearly. Men of first-class ability, like C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson, gave up all they possessed to assist in the struggle. Lord Hardinge, in a public speech at Madras, denounced the action of the Government of South Africa, and when his speech was criticized in London he stood his ground. It was soon obvious that the Viceroy voiced all that was articulate in the public opinion of India. Against this opinion General Smuts was not prepared to stand, and he agreed to the appointment of a Special Commission. The Special Commission, whose verdict was known more or less for certain beforehand, conceded all that Mr Gandhi had asked. The £3 tax was to go, and the law which made the Searle judgment possible was to be altered. The Government, accepting the verdict, incorporated the recommendations of the Commission in the Indians'

Relief Bill, which duly became law. Mr Gandhi had won his great triumph. Moreover, he had gained the undying respect of leaders in South Africa. General Smuts, with an outlook Imperial rather than provincial, and yet satisfied that a statesman cannot go far in advance of public opinion, now openly expressed his admiration for Mr Gandhi; and before he left South Africa—as it happened, for good—Mr Gandhi made peace with his adversary.

Satyagraha was discussed at the London dinner-tables. It was, so enthusiasts argued, the moral equivalent for war. But who among the leaders of the revolt in Ulster would prefer the methods of Mr Gandhi to their own? Pacifists in the Cabinet grew perplexed, though Mr Gandhi, as his boat carried him through the Bay of Biscay, was not to know how swiftly the war-clouds were gathering. Not until his boat sailed into the English Channel did he hear rumours of a submarine menace. Great Britain had just declared war upon Germany.

CHAPTER EIGHT

War on an Eastern Front

1914 made its desperate challenge to India. Lord Hardinge responded with a magnificent act of statesmanship. He knew that soon a million Indian troops would fight for a country which few of them had seen, and repel the invaders of Belgium—a country of which hitherto the great majority had heard nothing. India would be ready with money as well as with troops; for, almost immediately after the declaration of war upon Germany, India made a free and unfettered gift of one hundred million pounds to England's war exchequer. Nevertheless Lord Hardinge insisted, before a single Indian soldier was enlisted for service abroad, that the troops of India should be allowed to take their place with the troops of Britain and France on the Western Front. They were not to be decorative but inferior auxiliaries. Their fight for freedom, equality and democracy was to be real. Had not the Russo-Japanese War shown to all the world—a world forgetful of the Rajputs and Marathas—that Eastern troops are capable of defeating some of the finest fighters of the West? India gladly followed the Viceroy's lead, and in a moment of elation it accepted, almost without a murmur, a Defence of India Act so drastic that, if it had been presented to the Imperial Legislative Council at any other time, it would have provoked a controversy comparable to the agitation that followed Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal. But the War made Englishmen and Indians see their problems in a new light, and it was not long before Mr Asquith, the Prime Minister, declared that henceforward we must approach the problems of India "from a new

angle of vision." Very different were the words uttered a few years beforehand by Lord Morley. "The fur coat of Canada's Constitution," he said, "would never suit the actual conditions of the historical, cultural and psychological climate of India." And now Lord Morley, whose contribution to Liberal politics fell far short of his contributions to Radical literature, was driven by his dislike of the War into political retirement. Was it not, therefore, clear that the War was being pursued by the genuine Liberals of England?

But enthusiasm was soon to wane. Who could follow the slow and monotonous course of a war on a front more than six thousand miles from Delhi? The *Emden* bombarded Madras, and for a few anxious days Bombay waited to hear the roar of the *Emden's* guns; but, all things considered, belligerent Bombay was as safe as neutral New York. Then Germany's brilliant diplomacy succeeded, in early November, in bringing Turkey into open war with the Allies. Such a war strained to the uttermost the loyalty of Mohammedan India. The unsophisticated Mohammedan could not distinguish between the temporal powers of the Sultan and the spiritual office of the Caliph. It was as difficult for him to take up arms against the Sultan as it was difficult, before the accession of King Victor Emanuel, for a good Catholic to participate in Italian politics: and when the Sharif of Mecca openly rebelled against the Caliph, England appeared to aid and abet impiety. Furthermore, war with Turkey heralded the Mesopotamian campaign.

For more than eighteen months the Mesopotamian campaign was the toy of the Government of India, and it was not until early in 1916 that the War Office assumed control of the operations. Stories of unnecessary hardships and horrors, and of the accumulation of blunder upon

blunder, filtered through a patriotic Press. It was judged expedient to appoint a commission, and when, in May 1917, the Mesopotamia Commission published its Report, the Government of India was allowed no mercy. The Report condemned " the centralization of all authority in one man's hands " and was throughout contemptuous of Simla, " a hill-top in the Himalayas." " Bombay, Calcutta, London were all cognizant of what was going on: Simla and Delhi alone were unmoved." The Government of India, in other words, was not the efficient bureaucracy it claimed to be. It had pathetically mismanaged India's war endeavour; and thus it was with some excuse that Indians fastened upon the Mesopotamia minority report, signed by Mr Josiah C. Wedgwood, which said: " . . . we should no longer deny to Indians the full privileges of citizenship, but should allow them a large share in the government of their own country and in the control of that Bureaucracy which, in this War, uncontrolled by public opinion, has failed to rise to British standards." The Mesopotamia Report involved the resignation of Mr Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India. In his place reigned Edwin Samuel Montagu.

Mr Montagu, Under-Secretary at the India Office during the Morley *régime*, insisted upon going out to India and conferring with Lord Chelmsford, the new Viceroy, and the Indian leaders. The visit was not welcomed, and officials in Simla were puzzled to know whether the Secretary of State, who gave orders to the Viceroy, could claim precedence over him. Mr Montagu was anxious to do big and spectacular things. He enjoyed being garlanded by an extremist like Tilak, and when Mrs Annie Besant invited him to attend a session of the Indian National Congress he longed to " dash down to the Congress and make them a great oration; it might save the whole situation."

But " the whole situation " was not to be saved by a single speech. It needed more even than the voluminous Montagu-Chelmsford Report. If that Report was progressive and—as it proved to be—revolutionary, there was the same radical trend in other parts of the world. President Wilson inaugurated a Philippine Autonomy Act which declared that it was always the purpose of the people of the United States " to withdraw their sovereignty over the Philippine Islands, and to recognize their independence, as soon as a stable government can be established therein." Yet there were reactionary forces at work as well. The Revolution in Russia—at first proclaimed as a triumph for democracy—was soon seen to be a triumph for Marxism and other doctrines with which the people of the West were still unfamiliar. Amanullah, succeeding his murdered father as Amir of Afghanistan, defied the old attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the Government of India, looked to Moscow for encouragement, and then prepared to invade war-weary India. The Government of India had some excuse for wishing to perpetuate the Defence of India Act, which the Imperial Legislative Council had endorsed at the commencement of the War.

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Into the Indian turmoil came Mr Gandhi. Soon after he reached London, he attended a meeting of Indian residents who were to decide how they should respond to the call of war. There were some embittered students who wished to vote for non-co-operation. " We were slaves and they were masters. How could a slave co-operate with the master in the hour of the latter's need? Was it not the duty of the slave, seeking to be free, to make the master's need his opportunity? This argument failed to appeal to me then. I knew the difference of status between an Englishman and an Indian, but I did not believe that we had been

quite reduced to slavery. I felt then that it was more the fault of individual British officials than of the British system, and that we could convert them by love. If we would improve our status through the help and co-operation of the British, it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need. . . . The opposing friends felt that this was the hour for making a bold declaration of the Indian demands and for improving the Indians' status. I thought that England's needs should not be turned into our opportunity, and that it was more becoming and far-sighted not to press our demands while the War lasted." Mr Gandhi had spoken in this strain at the commencement of the Boer War. And what had his reward been, except a splendid opportunity for offering *Satyagraha*? Would the example of India in the new war melt the hearts of her rulers? Or had Gandhi no definite ideas about the humiliations or the advantages of the British *raj*? Suppose the heart of England remained cold and frigid: how could Gandhi resist offering *Satyagraha*, not merely on behalf of Indians, but of India? Would he support the War and then patiently await his chance to vindicate afresh the ethics of non-violence? Was his desire to support the War based on considerations of *realpolitik*, or on the conviction that Britain was still the champion of liberty? We shall never know.

Once again Indians accepted the leadership of Mr Gandhi, and volunteered their services for ambulance work. Once again—after the usual official delay—their offer was accepted. But, despite all these war activities, fate was to bring Mr Gandhi back to India; for a serious attack of pleurisy compelled him to seek a warmer climate.

Lord Willingdon, Governor of Bombay, hearing that Mr Gandhi was on his way to India, expressed a desire to meet him, and accordingly Mr Gandhi called at Government

House, immediately after his arrival. Lord Willingdon possessed even then the gift of treating everyone he meets as though he is a fellow-Etonian, and he pressed Mr Gandhi to come and see him whenever he proposed taking any steps concerning the Government. Mr Gandhi readily promised to make his calls. " It is my rule as a *satyagrahi*," he said, " to understand the viewpoint of the party I propose to deal with." Was *Satyagraha* uppermost in his mind?

Mr Gandhi left Bombay for Poona, where Gokhale received him with open arms. Twenty years before this, Mr Gokhale had founded the Servants of India Society. He gathered round him a group of men who considered themselves—as did Gandhi—" practical idealists." They were " the modern type of Indian *Sannyasi*, who wears the garb of ordinary men, mingles with them as one of themselves, and yet inwardly is the renouncer." Mr N. M. Joshi, the Indian Labour leader, is one of the best known members of the Servants of India Society. Like Gokhale himself, several of the members were inclined to be agnostic, and they certainly did not value asceticism as an end in itself. There is no doubt that Gokhale wished Mr Gandhi to become a member. There is also no doubt that Mr Gandhi expected other members to welcome him gladly. But the members of the Servants of India Society have a keen code. They believed in " service before self " long before Rotary assumed its present vast proportions, and the one weakness they could not endure was personal notoriety. They were, in fact, uncertain whether they ought to agree to Mr Gandhi's membership. Gokhale saw at once that Mr Gandhi's estrangement might have unhappy results. If his methods were in conflict with those the Servants of India preferred to pursue, it was the more imperative for members of the Society to win the *satyagrahis'*

friendship. Gokhale, therefore, extracted from Mr Gandhi a promise that for a period of twelve months he would take no part in political agitation, but travel round the country and see things for himself. Before the period elapsed Gokhale would do all in his power to remove misunderstandings between Mr Gandhi and the Servants of India. Within a few weeks Gokhale was dead.

Many of Mr Gandhi's co-workers at Phœnix and Tolstoy Farm had left South Africa for India, and were staying at Santineketan, which had already attained world-wide celebrity as the *ashram* of Dr Rabindranath Tagore. An exception was Hermann Kallenbach, who was now interned. Mr Gandhi left Poona for Santineketan, where he seems to have enjoyed himself thoroughly; for both Mr Pearson and Mr Andrews were reducing life at Santineketan to a simplicity it had not known before Dr Tagore set out on his voyage across America and Europe. When Gokhale died, it was only to be expected that Mr Gandhi would go to Poona and represent the South African helpers at the funeral. Mr Andrews accompanied him as far as Burdwan. "Do you think," asked Mr Andrews, "that a time will come for *Satyagraha* in India? And, if so, have you an idea when it will come?" Perhaps Mr Gandhi was not the only man thirsting for a fresh experiment in *Satyagraha*; and, at least, it was well that Gokhale had enjoined a year's silence.

Soon after the funeral, the Servants of India chose Mr Srinivasa Sastri to be their leader, and Mr Gandhi made a formal application to become a member. There were perplexities in Poona, though Mr Gandhi would certainly have been elected on a majority vote. But Mr Gandhi had no wish to be elected without unanimity, and he withdrew his application. He had, indeed, no need to attach himself to a society, for the number of men eager

to dabble in *Satyagraha* was now formidable. They could form an *ashram* of their own, and this, after a temporary lodging, Mr Gandhi succeeded in doing. He bought land on the banks of the Sabarmati river, where he could gaze at the mills of Ahmedabad. He was among his fellow-Gujeratis once again, and conveniently near the little State of Porbandar. Local pride and patriotism were to help him when, if ever, he took his place among the leaders of Nationalist India. He called his *ashram* the *Satyagraha Ashram*. " Its vicinity to the Sabarmati Central Jail was for me a special attraction, as jail-going was understood to be the normal lot of *satyagrahis*." His year was almost up.

In 1916 Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council for the abolition of the indenture system. It was a resolution similar to the one introduced by Gokhale six years before. Lord Hardinge willingly accepted the motion. His Majesty's Government, he announced, would secure the abolition " in due course." But Mr Gandhi quickly detected that " public opinion was solidly in favour of immediate abolition. Might this be a fit subject for *Satyagraha*? " *Satyagraha* would compel the attention not only of the Government of India, but of the British Government as well. It was incidental that governments engaged in defeating an enemy State by the means of war were not likely to study the ethics of *Satyagraha* at all closely. A year later Pandit Malaviya asked leave to introduce a Bill for the immediate abolition of the indenture system, and this the new Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, refused to give. Three years had passed since the world had witnessed an experiment in *Satyagraha*. It was time to give another. Mr Gandhi toured the country " for an All-India agitation." With a love for the finality of an ultimatum, Mr Gandhi declared that, either the indenture system must be abolished on

31st May, or the country must offer *Satyagraha*. He felt it his duty to lay bare his plans to the Viceroy, and asked for an interview, which was granted. Lord Chelmsford was kindly and sympathetic. Not for the last time did a Viceroy and a Mahatma outbid each other in courtesies. Before 31st May the Government brought the emigration of indentured labourers to an end. Mr Gandhi claimed that " potential *Satyagraha* hastened the end." None the less, he was merely urging the Government to accelerate its own programme.

A chance remark uttered at the Lucknow Congress in 1916, and then the persistent efforts of a politically-minded *ryot*, brought Mr Gandhi to Champaran, at the foot of the Himlayas. Here the *ryots*, or peasant cultivators, were subject to the *tinkathia* system. Twenty *kathas* are the equivalent of an acre, and the *tinkathia* system ordained that the *ryots* should plant three out of every twenty *kathas* with indigo. When Mr Gandhi arrived in Champaran, he called, as an act of courtesy, upon the Commissioner of the District and the secretary of the Indigo Planters Association. The Commissioner bullied him. The secretary of the Planters Association told him he was an outsider. Whereupon Mr Gandhi remained in Champaran. One day he set off on an elephant to see an aggrieved *ryot*. A messenger came running after him. The Police Superintendent was presenting his compliments. The Police Superintendent was, of course, serving an order on Mr Gandhi to quit the district, and as the offender continued to stay in Champaran there were court proceedings. Mr Gandhi at once sent a telegram to Lord Chelmsford, and then worked through the night arranging for investigations to continue while he was imprisoned. Naturally enough, officials began to regret the haste with which they had ordered court proceedings. They were not disposed to give

the pioneer of *Satyagraha* a spectacular arrest and sentence of imprisonment. The magistrate knew not what to do. A well-primed Government pleader asked for a postponement of the case. But Mr Gandhi himself intervened and pleaded guilty. The magistrate postponed judgment and, before Mr Gandhi could appear at the court to receive sentence, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bihar and Orissa ordered the case against him to be withdrawn. Mr Gandhi was free to prolong his investigations, and eventually joined a committee which the Government had itself appointed. Less than a year later the Bihar Legislative Council passed an Agrarian Bill which removed the grievance of the *ryots*.

Before long, there was an opportunity to offer *Satyagraha* in the heart of his beloved Gujerat; for the rich and thickly populated district of Kaira was suffering from a sudden shortage of crops. There is a long-standing rule in the Presidency of Bombay that, if the crop is only twenty-five per cent. of a full harvest yield, the cultivators may claim a year's suspension of the revenue assessment. When the crop falls below twenty-five per cent. of a full harvest yield, it is known as a " four-anna " crop. Mr Gandhi and his co-workers in Gujerat claimed that Kaira had a "four-anna" crop. The Government, on the contrary, contended that the crop was above " four annas." There followed deputations to Lord Willingdon and speeches in the Bombay Legislative Council. The Patel brothers, who are Gujeratis, came to the fore. Mr Vitalbhai Patel spoke frequently in the Legislature. Mr Vallabhbhai Patel put aside his lucrative work at the Bar. The issue ended—as probably Mr Gandhi wished it to end—in a new *Satyagraha* movement. The richer peasantry were to give an example to the poorer peasantry by refusing to pay the year's revenue to the Government. Unfortunately, the *Satyagraha* movement was not the success Mr Gandhi wished it to be. Among the

satyagrahis the number of defaulters increased rapidly, and Mr Gandhi sought an early opportunity to bring the movement to an end. Was *Satyagraha*, after all, an imperfect weapon? Or could it be used only when the case of the *satyagrahi* was unanswerable—the right weapon for the right people, only when they are undeniably in the right? For when the Government said that the crop in Kaira was in excess of four annas, it happened to be speaking from the book, and was sure of itself.

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Behind the agitation in Champaran and Kaira there burned at white heat a desire to improve the lot of the *ryot*. Mr Gandhi had seen poverty in South Africa. Here was the starkest poverty in his own country. His wife could not forget the complaint of a peasant woman in Champaran, who received her in her own hut. "Look now," Mr Gandhi records in his autobiography, "there is no box or cupboard here containing other clothes. The *sari* I am wearing is the only one I have. How am I to wash it? Tell Mahatmaji to get me another *sari*, and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day."

His outlook became progressively Indian and rural. It was only a matter of time before he could truthfully describe himself as a "farmer and spinner." He made himself one with the *ryots*. He had worn the frock-coat, the sergeant-major's uniform, the arrowed shirt of a Zulu convict: now he would wear nothing but the loin-cloth, which is the normal attire of some hundred millions of his countrymen. His teeth fell out, and he made no attempt to conceal the effect upon his appearance. Because pride and the desire to look Anglicized once made him discard the *shikkar* he agreed to grow it again. Because the Untouchables are not permitted to wear the sacred thread his chest remained bare. Concern for the Untouchables increased.

Untouchability, he argued again and again, formed no true part of the Hindu religion. If it did, he would beg the Untouchables to become either Christians or Mohammedans. He invited a family of Untouchables to live in the Sabarmati *ashram*, and he watched with pity and amusement the reactions of his wife and other members of the *ashram*. He was striking deep at the social roots of Hindustan. He was appealing—as hitherto no politician had attempted to do—to the *ryots* of India. Like Edwin Montagu, he was resolved to disturb the "pathetic contentment" of the Indian masses. Nor was the task so difficult as it appeared to be. The Hindu family system, the village community, with its ethical code and simple methods of justice, have survived one invasion after another. The indigenous system of local government is ancient and well-tried. It was the collapse of central government, not the failure of local government, that prepared the way for the British *raj*. Gandhi's genuine identification with the *ryot* made him at once the most effective—and perhaps the most conservative—spokesman of India.

But what his illimitable peasant constituency did not realize was the continued existence of a world-war. Mr Gandhi himself may have tried to forget. War had not made for Indian unity. Maulana Mahommed Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali had revolted at the prospect of a war with Turkey, and now, like his harmless old friend, Kallenbach, they were suffering internment. Every story about the War seemed to be an affront to Truth, to which he had dedicated his life.

It was no pleasure, therefore, for him to receive an invitation from Lord Chelmsford to attend, during the darkest hour of the European conflict, a War Conference in Delhi. Mr Gandhi went to Delhi with a heavy heart. While he was there, Mr Andrews told him about the

newspaper controversy over secret treaties, between Britain and Italy. In view of those secret treaties, was it moral, Mr Andrews asked, to participate in a War Conference? Mr Gandhi, facing the question, assumed that participation could not be moral, and he therefore explained his moral doubts in a long letter to Lord Chelmsford. Lord Chelmsford was never informed of the inner secrets of the War Cabinet, and he knew of the secret treaties only through the newspapers. It may have seemed to him a strange issue to raise in Delhi. However, he treated the moral doubter with infinite patience, begged him not to place his confidence in newspaper reports, and invited him to raise whatever moral issues he liked, once the War had come to an end. The Viceregal arguments convinced Mr Gandhi. He attended the War Conference, and, uttering the first Hindustani speech ever heard at a Viceregal meeting, he supported a resolution for intensive recruiting.

He committed himself to recruiting, and he was as good as his word, for he was soon touring Kaira. But the response was hopeless. Peasants listened, and with their homely philosophy chided him for his inconsistency. "You are a votary of *Ahimsa*; how can you ask us to take up arms?" Mr Gandhi was utterly miserable. He became dangerously ill with dysentery. To all appearances, he was a dying man. Mr Vallabhbhai Patel rushed to the *ashram* to announce that the War had come to an end, but still Mr Gandhi showed no signs of rallying. Friends urged him to break his vow against drinking milk. If he would not drink milk, he must drink meat broth. They quoted from the Ayurveda to show that meat broth has a scriptural sanction. It was of no avail.

The worst was over. Mr Gandhi began to recover; yet so gradually, that friends feared it impossible for him fully to regain his strength without drinking quantities of milk.

He explained to them why he had taken this strange vow. Mrs Gandhi overheard him. A bright idea occurred to her. The vow was a prohibition of the milk of the cow; not a prohibition of the milk of the goat. Mr Gandhi exhausted a whole gamut of moral doubts, and then accepted the suggestion. He could drink goat's milk, and so refrain from violating the letter of his vow. Thus it was that Gandhi and his goats crept into the repertory of the world's cartoonists.

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The War was over; but, in the words of Mazzini, " The morrow of victory is often more perilous than its eve." Anger and discontent stalked through India. The Government believed that it was necessary to have extraordinary powers for dealing with the problems of a new period of reconstruction. A commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Mr Justice Rowlatt, and its Report virtually recommended the continuation in peace-time of the Defence of India Act, which the Imperial Legislative Council had sanctioned only because the glamour of war was novel and because Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, enjoyed great personal popularity. Its continuation in peace-time was another matter; Congressmen and Moderates joined in condemning the Rowlatt Report. Mr Gandhi read the Report and decided to get well quickly. Here was material enough for another *Satyagraha* movement.

The Government was determined to incorporate the recommendations of the Rowlatt Report in a Bill. All the political leaders flocked to Delhi to hear the Indian members oppose the Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council. Mr Gandhi entered the Imperial Legislative Council for the first and only time. From the gallery he saw Lord Chelmsford listen entranced to the eloquent words of Mr Sastri, who, if Mr Gandhi had joined the

Servants of India Society, would have been his leader and political *guru*. Lord Chelmsford was deeply impressed. But nothing that Mr Sastri said would influence the decision already made by the Viceroy, the Viceregal advisers, the Secretary of State, the India Office and the Cabinet. Lord Morley himself denied that the Imperial Legislative Council was a parliamentary body. "If," he said in the House of Lords during a debate on the Morley-Minto reforms, "it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it." Lord Chelmsford and Mr Gandhi were listening to expressions of impotent rage against an accomplished fact. But the days of the Imperial Legislative Council were numbered. In its place was to rise the Chamber of Princes, the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, for all their faults, were to give India a parliamentary form of government.

Mr Gandhi was now free to commence a new performance of *Satyagraha*. He formed a special *Satyagraha* league in Bombay, and called upon the people not only to offer *Satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Acts, but also "such other laws as a Committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit." Mrs Annie Besant could not see the point of offering *Satyagraha* against laws which a non-existent Committee might think harmful or immoral. Others could not see the point of offering *Satyagraha* at all. At the very moment of his accession to political power, Mr Gandhi was driving a wedge between Moderates and Extremists. It was only a question of time before the Moderates seceded from the Congress Party and formed the National Liberal Federation. Mr Gandhi unwittingly expelled some of the finest brains in the country. He was to pay dearly for this loss.

But how was *Satyagraha* to be offered? In a dream, an idea came to Mr Gandhi. He would call upon the country to observe a general *hartal*. On 30th March all shops and places of business were to be closed as a sign of mourning. "*Satyagraha* is a process of self-purification, and ours is a sacred fight, and it seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should be commenced with an act of self-purification." Later on, he changed the date of the *hartal* from 30th March to 6th April, and his colleagues forgot to let the leaders in Delhi know the change of date. Delhi consequently observed the *hartal* on 30th March. There were serious clashes with the police, and India was to learn in advance that a *hartal* observed by *satyagrahis* could end in bloodshed.

On 6th April, Mr Gandhi was in Bombay surrounded by some thousands of *satyagrahis*. The Government had proscribed *Hind Swaraj* as well as *Sarvodaya*, which was Mr Gandhi's Gujerati translation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. Mr Gandhi, therefore, defied the law by selling copies of these books to individuals in the crowd. He learned afterwards that the books he was selling were a reprint. The Government proscribed the books, but not the reprint. So Mr Gandhi had not broken the law after all, and all the *satyagrahis* were disappointed; for it is seldom that a wag finds employment for his talents in the legal departments of the Government of India.

Next day Mr Gandhi set off for Delhi. He had heard of riots in Delhi, Amritsar, and other parts of the Punjab, and he wanted to examine conditions for himself. Meanwhile Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, was determined that Mr Gandhi should not enter the Punjab. Before the train reached Palwal station, a policeman served Mr Gandhi with a written order not to enter the Punjab. Mr Gandhi, on principle, stayed where

he was. The train came into the station, and Mr Gandhi was at once placed in the custody of the police, bundled into a third-class carriage, confined in the police barracks at Muttra, and later taken in a goods train as far as Sawa Madhupur, where a superb Inspector of Police invited him to enter his first-class carriage, in a train going southwards to Bombay. The Inspector of Police praised the virtues of Sir Michael O'Dwyer; but, unhappily, Mr Gandhi's answers are not recorded. He urged Mr Gandhi to leave the Punjab and obey the order. Mr Gandhi refused. Then, said the Inspector of Police, regretfully, the law will have to be enforced. " But what are you going to do to me? " The Inspector did not know; and the train reached the coast before he could find anyone to relieve him, and act as Mr Gandhi's warder.

The news of his arrest, however, created havoc in the *bazars* of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Amritsar. Casualties mounted up. There had been no *ahimsa*, no non-violence. Mr Gandhi had made his " Himalayan miscalculation." He publicly confessed his error and called off the *Satyagraha* movement. He might retract *Satyagraha*, but he could not end the consequences of violence; for within a few days came the abysmal tragedy of Jalianwalla Bagh. Fifteen hundred people lay dead and wounded, shot by the orders of an English general. It took time before the facts were disseminated throughout the country. They caused consternation in Delhi and Whitehall, and the Hunter Committee was appointed to make an inquiry. The Congress likewise wished to make an inquiry, and it appointed Mr Gandhi and others on its committee. In course of time, Lord Chelmsford permitted Mr Gandhi to enter the Punjab, and the Congress inquiry began. It was difficult to discover the truth. There was a nation-wide hysteria. Reports were grossly exaggerated. Mr Gandhi,

determined to give the country a lesson in the ethics of *Satyagraha*, would allow no wilful exaggeration or distortion of the facts to appear in the Congress Report. He publicly proclaimed that General Dyer was a brave man. And the result was a document which Mr Gandhi believed to be a faithful representation of what happened at Jalianwalla Bagh: "not a single statement in it," he once wrote, "has ever been disproved."

Mr Gandhi's presence in the Punjab brought him into touch with the Mohammedan leaders, who were frightened by events. The new Amir of Afghanistan, exaggerating the disruptive forces in the country, made a fruitless attempt to invade India. The Khilafatist cause was not going well. Turkey had been beaten to her knees, and, though Mr Montagu was doing all he could to protect that country from the fiendish animosity of Allied statesmen, there was no assurance that the honour of the Caliph would be upheld. The Ali brothers turned to Mr Gandhi. He, at least, was successful in his methods. More than once he had threatened to offer *Satyagraha* and the Government gave way. He had a long train of successes; the train of failures was still to come. And Mr Gandhi was more than flattered by the attentions of the Ali brothers. He longed for Hindu-Mohammedan unity. In South Africa, Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsis, Chinese and Christians followed his leadership. Why should he not be an All-India leader? And how else could he become an All-India leader except by championing the cause of the Khilafatists? He even professed to see in the teachings of the Prophet a religion of non-violence. Can self-deception go further? The Ali brothers were prepared to offer *Satyagraha* when the time came. But whereas with Gandhi *Satyagraha* is a weapon to be wielded only by the pure in heart, with the Ali brothers and their friends it was manifestly a weapon of expediency.

Mr Gandhi attained Hindu-Mohammedan unity by too short a cut.

A month later the Indian National Congress met in full session at Amritsar. By that time the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had passed smoothly through all the Parliamentary stages. The King's Proclamation had just been published. "Let those who in their eagerness for political progress have broken the law in the past respect it in the future," ran the words of the King-Emperor. "Let it become possible for those who are charged with the maintenance of peaceful and orderly government to forget the extravagances which they have had to curb. A new era is opening. Let it begin with common determination among my people and my officers to work together for a common purpose. I therefore direct my Viceroy to exercise in my name and on my behalf my Royal clemency to political offenders in the fullest measure which in his judgment is compatible with the public safety." Those words deeply impressed Mr Gandhi. He thought that, in the words of the King, "a new era is opening," and when he heard that Mr Tilak and Mr Das were to move a resolution rejecting the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, he so amended it that Congress found itself committed to working the new reforms. "The Royal Proclamation," he said, "is full of goodwill, and it would be wrong for Congress not to have responded to the King's call for co-operation. We shall lose nothing by beginning with co-operation and shall at once place the bureaucracy in the wrong."

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Happy the man who could have steered a straight course through the conflicting passions and grievances of political India in 1920. It was a condition of his *rapprochement* with the Ali brothers that Mr Gandhi should share the grief of the Khilafatists if Great Britain and her Allies imposed

harsh terms of peace upon a country which, when all was said and done, had been beaten in war. By the middle of May those peace terms were known. Mr Lloyd George had broken his pledges to the Mohammedan leaders of India. Were the statesmen of England no more trustworthy than the statesmen of South Africa before the War? Mr Gandhi met the leaders at the Moslem Conference of Allahabad. There the Mohammedans of India ratified Mr Gandhi's resolution for a campaign of non-co-operation. Yet, in a moment of triumph, Mr Gandhi hesitated. He wrote to the Viceroy: " The only course open to me is either in despair to sever all connection with British rule, or, if I still retain faith in the inherent superiority of the British Constitution, to adopt such means as will rectify the wrong done, and thus restore confidence. I have not lost faith in the superiority of the British Constitution, and it is because I believe in it, that I have advised my Moslem friends to withdraw their support from Your Excellency's Government, and advised the Hindus to join them."

None the less, loss of faith in the superiority of the British Constitution was to come almost immediately. The Hunter Commission issued its Report. General Dyer was censured; he was considered no longer fit for service in India. That Report came at a time when relations between Englishmen and Indians were strained almost to breaking-point. Sir Michael O'Dwyer gallantly defended General Dyer. General Dyer was a man of unusual sympathies, but in the manner of defending himself he had been his own worst enemy. Barristers heard of his defence, and longed to come to his assistance; and some years later a judge, famed for his humanity, paid his tribute to General Dyer in a High Court judgment. But there were others whose minds were prejudiced, even before they read the evidence. There were Englishmen who refused to hear a word in

support of the dead and dying at Jalianwalla Bagh; and a great Bombay editor who held that General Dyer was in the wrong braved the threats of social ostracism. The Hunter Report created a storm in England. The House of Lords rejected the Government's declaration. The House of Commons only narrowly accepted it. Parliamentary speeches were quoted *verbatim* in the Indian Press. Some of the Parliamentary voices suggested that England was ready to sing her hymns of hate. The good impression created by the King's proclamation was completely destroyed. The oldest English newspaper opened a fund for General Dyer, to which the Conservative public liberally contributed. Mr Gandhi lost his sense of proportion. So doing, he lost his usual sense of humour and his hold upon the inner meaning of *Satyagraha*. In the Congress Report on Jalianwalla Bagh he never asked that General Dyer should be punished. He was willing to nurse General Dyer, he once said, if he became ill. In a happier mood he might have contributed himself to the Dyer Fund, just as Pusey wanted to contribute to the funds for the erection of the Martyrs' Memorial at Oxford. But the mind of India was grim and embittered, and it coloured all of Mr Gandhi's actions. He would have nothing more to do with such a Government. " It is better to die in the way of God than to live in the way of Satan. Therefore, whoever is satisfied that this Government represents the activity of Satan has no choice left to him but to dissociate himself from it."

CHAPTER NINE

Swadeshi and Swaraj

SEVERAL powerful leaders were anxious for a weapon with which to cripple the authority of the Government of India. There was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, at heart an agnostic, but unrivalled in the ability to play upon the religious susceptibilities of his followers. Many years ago he had opposed a Government's Age of Consent Bill because, he said, an alien Government has no right to impose matrimonial legislation upon the people. For more than thirty years he had consistently incited hatred for the Government. He was once sentenced to a term of six years' imprisonment. His method of propaganda did not always do him credit. For him the end justified the means—means which the British ruling class judged to be contemptible—and the end was *swaraj*. There was Lala Lajpat Rai, who, during the Morley-Minto days, was accused of enticing soldiers from their military duties, was tried for sedition and eventually acquitted. Above all, there was Pandit Motilal Nehru, proudest and ablest of all the Kashmiri Brahmans. Motilal Nehru, an accomplished traveller, thoroughly conversant with the literature of India, Persia and Europe, earned at the Allahabad Bar an income in excess of the princely income earned by his cousin, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. He entertained with a regal magnificence, and his mansion was open to all comers. Many were the Englishmen who accepted his lavish hospitality. Confident alike of esteem and popularity, he was persuaded to apply for membership of a prominent European club; but he was soon to learn that he had overstepped the limits beyond which a cultured and aristocratic Brahman may not go. It

was one thing to offer Englishmen hospitality; and another to apply for admission to the intimacy of an English club. The full details of the story are a little obscure. Some say that the Pandit was "black-balled"; others, that he was advised to withdraw his application for membership. Whatever the true details may have been, the insult rankled. It was a personal insult, and an insult to an ancient community of which Motilal Nehru was almost the chief ornament. Motilal Nehru proposed henceforward to forswear English society, and he found his son Jawaharlal, an old Harrovian, in agreement with him. Yet the renunciation was never complete. There were certain English friends whom he could not refuse to see, and there were others who would not let him go. He turned to his favourite poets for consolation, and it was in the order of things that some of these poets should be English. Indians are not the only people to discover that the literature of England is the literature of revolt. He re-read Shelley, an aristocrat like himself. But it was Shelley's music and not his anarchy that held him captive. An Englishman once found him strolling up and down his terrace, and reading *Adonais* aloud. "What music!" he exclaimed; "Swinburne is timbrel and brass by comparison."

He, too, longed for *swaraj*; and when he heard that Mr Gandhi and the Mohammedan leaders were agreeing on a policy of "progressive non-violent non-co-operation," to rectify Khilafat and Punjab wrongs, he thought that a golden opportunity had come. He would meet Mr Gandhi and persuade him that the root-cause of the Khilafatist and the Punjab wrongs was the absence of *swaraj*. Nor was the task of persuasion too difficult. In fact, the Mahatma—for such he had come to be called—accepted the justice of *swaraj* as readily as he had accepted the justice of the Khilafatist cause. Hitherto, he had offered *Satyagraha* only

against particular wrongs. Again and again he had publicly professed to be among the staunchest supporters of the British Empire. Stretcher-bearer, sergeant-major, recruiting officer—he had borne all these distinctions bravely. Only a few months before, he had declined even to consider the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms disappointing. Now, he was advocating *swaraj*, which meant the exclusion of Englishmen as a political power. Was it to so great an extent as this that the Government of India represented "the activity of Satan"? Where was the logic in the attitude of a man who openly admired the Royal Proclamation and expressed himself ready to work the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms? A woman might plead that she was trusting her intuition rather than her reasoning faculties. She might feel that England was insincere. A biographer might find in Mr Gandhi's antecedents the preparation for a final attitude of mistrust; but even this discovery does not provide an exhaustive explanation. There lurked the need for power. Once again we see the resemblance to Manning. Manning renounced everything—except power. Yet that power which he so eagerly coveted made him afraid. He refused the post of Sub-Almoner—an office that once led Randall Davidson to the Archbishopric of Canterbury. He struggled with tortuous diplomacy to gain the Archbishopric of Westminster, but when the chance came for him to compete—however unsuccessfully—for the Papal tiara he turned aside. If Mr Gandhi did not love power, at least he needed it. The mere holding of high office has not impressed him. He has cheerfully watched the election of smaller men to the Presidency of the Indian National Congress; but to accept a position from which he could not impose his own political ethics and his own weapons of moral warfare would be to betray the light within him. When he expressed satisfaction at the

Montagu-Chelmsford reforms—and they were far more revolutionary than either British or Indian opinion realized at the time—he was numbering himself among the Conservatives. He would have become not merely a right-wing figure, but a leader of the past. It was not to be borne; and Mr Gandhi accepted at last the responsibilities of a fully-fledged politician. Dr Rabindranath Tagore, still voyaging across Europe and pleading for a synthesis between the cultures of the East and the West, heard of Mr Gandhi's new championship of *swaraj*, and expressed regret. But for Mr Gandhi there had been no violation of principle. " To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face "—run the closing words of his autobiography—" one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."

It followed, therefore, that the new politician could not swallow up the old Ruskinian. As Mr Gandhi wandered through the grounds of the *ashram*, and gazed across the sluggish waters of the Sabarmati river to the serried rows of mill-chimneys in Ahmedabad, he felt strengthened in the resolve to replace machine-made goods by hand-made goods. " Dark satanic mills " had menaced England and America for more than a century, and, almost within his own lifetime, they had begun to appear in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Cawnpore and Lucknow. The plight of the industrial worker, Mr Gandhi readily believed, was harsh and degrading. Patriots called for a boycott of foreign cloth; they sought, in particular, a boycott of British cloth, since it was not fair that India should export millions of cotton

bales to Lancashire, and receive in return manufactured and high-priced calico. But Mr Gandhi was not disposed to replace British cloth by Indian cloth, when the conditions of the mill-worker's life in Ahmedabad were—to say the least—no better than the conditions of the mill-worker's life in Rochdale. It was not his desire to see the beloved Gujerat peopled with mill-workers. When he was writing *Hind Swaraj*, as the boat took him for the last time back to South Africa, he claimed that, if India needs an abundant supply of cotton goods, the villagers must manufacture their own supplies. He has never departed from this view. The heart of India is the heart of any one of the half-a-million villages dotted over the vast country. The importance of the India of the towns—of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras—is exaggerated. So far, industrialism has made a relatively small advance in India. Need it go further? Morris and Ruskin preached a return to the simple life. Yet their gospel was an escape from, rather than a solution of, the problems of their age. Already England was so intensively industrialized that a return to truly rural conditions of life became a faded Utopian dream. There could be no such return—not, indeed, without the slow starvation of many thousands of her workers. But India is still rural. It is possible—and, perhaps, even necessary—to hold the industrial advance in check. India herself knows the mood for change. A great city like Bombay has shown a particular aptitude for the machine. It has introduced model tramway and bus services, and inaugurated elaborate services of electric trains. It has considered plans for an Underground. One day, in all probability, India will take her place among the great industrialized countries of the world. But to what advantage? It was Gandhi the realist—not Gandhi a Utopian dreamer—who wished to keep his countrymen in the villages. He would tempt them to remain with the

spinning-wheel, or *charka*. He would perfect the *charka*, and so keep three hundred millions of his countrymen, rich and poor, twice-born and low-born, contentedly employed. Unhappily, the art of the hand-loom had fallen long ago into disuse, and he had practically to unearth the *charka*. Not until he was recovering from his serious illness did he first learn to spin. The hum of his *charka* soothed his nerves and, together with the new supplies of goat's milk, helped to make his recovery complete. Mr Gandhi knew well enough that there were no large fortunes to be made from the hand-loom. There was not even a living. None the less, the hand-loom could help to supplement a worker's income; and during three months of the year the Indian peasant cannot toil in his fields.

Mill-owners in Ahmedabad watched Mr Gandhi's crusade for the *charka* with amusement and contempt. Yet not with anger; for they are convinced that the spinners of *khaddar* will never compete successfully with the mills. Boycott Lancashire goods, and the bulk of the orders go to the Indian mills. The *charkas*, they claim, can supply only an infinitesimal portion of the demand. The Indian mill-owners have not hesitated to contribute to the Congress funds, even when Mr Gandhi is at the helm. The economic foundations of the *charka* are not yet very strong. But homespun *khaddar* is like *Satyagraha*—an idea which Mr Gandhi bequeaths to the world and to other generations. It is significant that Mr Gandhi spoke frequently of "the ethics of *khaddar*"—seldom, if ever, of "the economics of *khaddar*." With Mr Gandhi most problems are ethical. Liquor and opium are evils. What more damning indictment could he have of the satanic Government of India than its willingness to extract revenue from the sale of liquor and opium? And when Pandit Motilal Nehru persuaded him to demand *swaraj*, surely a heaven-

sent opportunity had come to him to purify the soul of India. The Khilafatists might have strange ideas; but at least they were his fellow-countrymen. Acceptance first of the Khilafat cause and then of *swaraj* made Mr Gandhi the spokesman of Nationalist India. Moreover, he was spokesman on his own terms. He could abolish the drink and opium trade, and so embarrass a Government that drew revenue from these "evils." He could spread the ethics of *khaddar*, and make one supreme offer of *Satyagraha* capable of convincing all the world that he had found the moral equivalent for war. Elsewhere statesmen were talking of national reconstruction. Mr Gandhi, however, was thinking in terms of national regeneration. Yet in Mr Gandhi's theocracy there was to be room for the Hindu, the Mohammedan, the Parsee, the Christian, the Untouchable and the Agnostic. The watchword of the theocratic State was not to be a religious creed, but a moral code. Men might differ in their views and interpretations of God; they were nevertheless to hold fast to righteousness. The way of the Government of India was to tax salt—a commodity used by the poorest of the poor—and to exact revenue from liquor and opium. The way of the Government of India was, therefore, evil. Other leaders might advocate Liberalism, and Liberalism passes out of fashion. They might pay tribute to Nationalism, and Nationalism gives place to Internationalism and Cosmopolitanism. But the way of righteousness is permanent. So Mr Gandhi thinks. So Huxley thought when he argued with Gladstone that the Christian ethics would remain after the Christian religion had disappeared.

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From the very start there was a departure from the exalted standards of *Satyagraha*. Convinced though he declared himself to be, that the Mohammedan religion

was a religion of non-violence, Mr Gandhi nevertheless set out to make *Satyagraha* easier of acceptance to his new Mohammedan friends. He abandoned the word *Satyagraha* altogether, leaving in its place the word non-co-operation. He timed non-co-operation to begin on 1st August 1920; and he called on his followers to surrender all titles of honour, to refrain from subscribing to Government loans, to forswear legal practice, to arbitrate and not to litigate, to boycott Government schools and the new Legislative Councils, to avoid official functions, to refuse all offices, and finally, to spread the gospel of *swadeshi*. On 1st August he inaugurated the movement by dispatching a letter to the Viceroy, in which he explained all that he proposed to do. " It is not without a pang," he wrote, " that I return the Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal granted to me by your predecessor for my humanitarian work in South Africa, the Zulu War Medal, granted in South Africa for my services as officer in charge of the Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps in 1906, and the Boer War Medal for my services as assistant superintendent of the Indian Volunteer Stretcher-bearer Corps during the Boer War of 1899-1900." But " I can retain neither respect nor affection for a Government which has been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend its immorality." " The Government must be moved to re-pentance." Yet, even in his proclamation of non-co-operation, Mr Gandhi expressed the hope that the Viceroy would summon a conference of all the leaders of Indian opinion. What he wanted was a Round Table Conference at which Englishmen and Indians could meet as equals. Almost exactly ten years later Indian delegates to a Round Table Conference in London were booking their passages.

Non-co-operation had begun. Leaders returned their honours and decorations. Lawyers gave up their practices. Principals retired from their schools. Fashionable women

forsook their silk *saris* for *saris* made from *khaddar*. Mrs Sarojini Naidu, once the most popular lady of Girton, welcomed the homespun *khaddar*, though she would still have liked to send it to Paris to be made up. Pandit Motilal Nehru gave up his fine clothes, and yet took care that his *khaddar* should assume the dignified appearance of a Roman *toga*, which suited him admirably. The days when he sent his baskets of dress-shirts continually moving between Paris and Allahabad were over. With such a response as this, it was necessary to summon the Indian National Congress in special session, and so win authorized support for a movement which Mr Gandhi and the Khilafatists commenced more or less on their own initiative. The special session was held in Calcutta during September. Lala Lajpat Rai presided. In his speech, Mr Gandhi insisted that, if non-co-operation could be loyally maintained, *swaraj* would become a certainty within a year. He explained away his former support of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. "The issue is, whether *swaraj* has to be gained through the new Councils or without the Councils. Knowing the British Government to be utterly unrepentant, how can we believe that the new Councils will lead to *swaraj*?" If India is to have a partnership with England, "it must be a partnership at will." With his speech Mr Gandhi won the day, though at the cost of some valuable colleagues. Mr C. R. Das was not convinced. Pandit Malaviya was actively opposed. Mrs Annie Besant withdrew from the Congress altogether and joined the Liberals. There were others who disliked the weapon of non-co-operation. Ireland used violence and, so doing, was a cause of desperate anxiety to the British Government. India is a hundred Irelands in one. Why should not India follow Ireland's example? None the less, the Calcutta Congress gave Mr Gandhi a two-thirds majority. He could

push ahead with the movement and wait for the waverers to join his camp, as very soon they did. He seemed to be passing from one triumph to another. He was confident of the ultimate victory. He addressed open letters to the Englishmen in India, and if they showed a stubborn indifference and, indeed, an ignorance of what was going on at the time, Mr Gandhi was making a steady appeal to foreign opinion. He became "front page news" in the United States and Germany. In those days, the saint and the pacifist in politics was an unusual phenomenon. Ireland and India were breaking away from England's control. So the British Empire had not "emerged from the War stronger than it was before"?

Meanwhile, Delhi seemed not to know what was going on. It had made a similar mistake when its own War Department heaped up the blunders of Mesopotamia. Lord Chelmsford referred to Mr Gandhi's return of war decorations and to other gestures as "inanities." He had been an extremely conscientious and hard-working Viceroy. He met Mr Gandhi frequently, and did all he could to dissipate a plethora of moral doubts. He could match the courtesy of his adversary, and the support which he gave to Montagu—knowing full well that the Secretary of State was not popular with the Prime Minister or other members of the Cabinet—shows that he had no petty policies of his own to pursue. Unfortunately, he relied too much upon the new reforms to remove all the ills of the body politic. Once the reforms were in full operation, Mr Gandhi, he believed, would be a discredited figure. It was necessary, however, to increase the popularity of the new reforms, and both the Secretary of State and the Viceroy eagerly supported the proposal that the Duke of Connaught should visit Delhi and open the new Legislatures on behalf of the King-Emperor.

In a bygone Anglo-India, the Duke of Connaught was the best-known and the best-loved figure. He was Commander-in-Chief of the now disbanded Bombay Army. He lived in the Admiral's House in Bombay, later the home of Admiral Slade and his two daughters. It was in Bombay and Poona that he spent the best years of his life. And if he belonged to a past generation of Anglo-Indians—a generation that watched Lord Harris, Governor of Bombay, ride down to the *maidan* in the cool of the evening to teach whatever Indian youngsters he could find the manly game of cricket—there were yet many Indians who remembered the Duke with affection. There was no member of the Royal Family better fitted for the task of reviving the loyalty of Nationalist India to the Throne. Yet, when he reached Bombay, an unnatural calm fell over the city. He drove along the *maidan*, where in distant years he had participated in many spectacular reviews and functions. His hand was ready for a salute, but the little groups of sightseers were silent, and with the hand ready for the salute, the Duke curled his moustache. The incident made the Government realize that Gandhi was establishing his claim to speak on behalf of the dumb masses of India.

In the middle of the Duke's visit the Congress met in annual session at Nagpur. Only three months had elapsed since the special session at Calcutta; but this time twenty thousand Congressmen assembled to make a unanimous decision. Mr C. R. Das and Pandit Malaviya joined forces with Mr Gandhi at last. Their minds were bent upon achieving *swaraj* within a year. Under the influence of this ideal, they altered the constitution of the Congress; for their goal was now to be *swaraj* "within the British Empire, if possible, and without, if necessary," and they would pursue this goal "by all peaceful and legitimate means." In the hour of his triumph, Mr Gandhi was

holding back the extremists. They were anxious to pursue this goal "by all means." They did not believe that the means need be "peaceful and legitimate." They would have preferred the methods of guerrilla warfare adopted by the gunmen of Dublin. Nor could they listen with very much sympathy to a man who, while he thought the Government of India "satanic," made no irrevocable decision to destroy the British connection. "If," he still continued to say, "the British connection is for the advancement of India, we do not want to destroy it." A good movement, Mr Gandhi once declared in South Africa, does not need to depend on funds. At Nagpur other counsels prevailed. Mr Gandhi asked for a war-chest of a crore of rupees—about three-quarters of a million pounds—as a memorial to Mr Tilak, who had recently died. Henceforward the Congress could win one manœuvre by the appeal of an apostolic simplicity and another by the driving force of great material possessions; for, indeed, the war-chest was to work wonders.

CHAPTER TEN

Towards Civil Disobedience

THE Duke of Connaught formally opened the Central Legislature in Delhi, and the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms came into operation. The new Legislative Assembly was boycotted as a matter of course by all Congressmen. The Moderates, however, seized their opportunity, and supplied candidates for every possible constituency. They would not allow the cause of reform to go by default. Yet it seems that Congress could well afford to give the Moderates this initial advantage. In official language, they were seeking to set up a parallel Government. The Legislative Council reflected the religious mosaic that is India. There were seats for all the minorities, seats for commercial magnates and landowners, seats for Untouchables, and a number of seats for Englishmen. But to all appearances, Congress had risen above the barriers of caste and class. Where the Legislative Assembly reflected the Indian disunity, Congress represented unity. So far, nothing had happened to disturb the friendship between the Mahatma and the Ali brothers. There was, in fact, no serious doubt that the conflict would end within the year. For that reason alone, the Congress's appeal to the youth of India was irresistible.

None the less, the Government did not lack ample supplies of first-class talent. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru would have nothing to do with non-co-operation. Apart altogether from the extremists, who wanted to destroy the British connections by all successful means, there was a large body of opinion reluctant to accept the alternative of theocratic government. Mr Gandhi's puritanism men found irksome

and irrelevant to the struggle for *swaraj*. If they gave a hesitant consent to the non-co-operation movement, they disputed the wisdom of withdrawing children from the schools. Pandit Motilal Nehru could join Mr Gandhi, because his son had long since left Harrow. But Mr Gandhi's eldest son was publicly to denounce his father for denying him the educational advantages that the grandson of a former Prime Minister of Porbandar deserved to have. Mr Gandhi founded a National University within a few hundred yards of the Sabarmati *ashram*. He is Chancellor of his own university, where Gujerati youths learn to spin and weave, and are required to study all that is best in the Hindu and Mohammedan religions. "The vast treasures of Sanscrit and Arabic, Persian and Pali and Magadhi have to be ransacked to discover wherein lies the source of strength for the nation. The ideal is not merely to feed on or repeat the ancient cultures, but to build a new culture based on the traditions of the past and enriched by the experiences of later times. The ideal is a synthesis of the different cultures that have come to stay in India, that have influenced Indian life, and that, in their turn, have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil. This synthesis will naturally be of the *swadeshi* type, where each culture is assured its legitimate place, and not of the American pattern, where one dominant culture absorbs the rest and where the aim is not toward harmony but toward an artificial and enforced unity." The Chancellor of the University hoped that "ere long the suicidal cleavage between the educated and the uneducated will be bridged. And as an effect of giving an industrial education to the genteel folks, and a literary education to the industrial classes, the unequal distribution of wealth and social discontent will be considerably checked."

It was one of the most ambitious of his sociological

experiments. He was training the *khaddar* mind for the *khaddar* civilization. *Swadeshi* could not be confined to things alone. He was doing what he tried to do at Phœnix and Tolstoy Farm—to provide a wholesome but indigenous system of education. He would undo the harm he thought Thomas Babington Macaulay had done when, as Law Member of the Governor-General of Bengal, he decided that the future basis of education in India must be English. He forgot that when Macaulay opposed the Orientalists he had on his side the bravest reformers of India, and it so happened that, when Mr Gandhi founded his National University, the best minds of India were against him. Indians might submit themselves to Mr Gandhi's experiments in *satyagraha* and *swaraj*, but they would not submit their own children to his experiments in education. Dr Tagore heard of the founding of the National University, and realized that a mind alien from his own was seeking to mould the youth of India. Sabarmati was stealing a march upon Santiniketan.

Dr Tagore's mind was comprehensive and embracive. He had witnessed the evil excesses of Nationalism. Countries culturally united had been at war. Something, therefore, was wrong with European culture. The cure for culture, it seemed to him, was more culture. The West needed the aid of the East: the East needed the aid of the West. He encouraged Indian students to live not only in England, but in France. If he watched with intense sympathy the struggle of Irishmen to gain their own type of *swaraj*, the Irishman with whom he had the closest affinities was Mr W. B. Yeats—the man who made his music with the English language, the man who saw clearly that the East could save the West from the crudities of its materialistic outlook. A Nationalist, a lover of simplicity, a cosmopolitan; Mr Yeats combined all these qualities, and

these qualities to Dr Tagore seemed good. Mr Gandhi came near to possessing these qualities; but the failure of full possession somehow distorted his vision. He had Nationalism without cosmopolitanism. Instead of simplicity —the art of putting first things first—there was austerity. The difference between the artist and the moralist asserted itself. There was bound to be a deep cleavage between the Brahman and the Gujerati. The aristocratic and the peasant mind are not identical. Or does the difference lie between the Brahman mind and the Buddhist mind—the way of fulfilment and the way of negation?

"The infinite personality of man," wrote Dr Tagore, "can only come from the magnificent harmony of all human races. My prayer is that India may represent the co-operation of all the peoples of the world. For India, unity is truth, and division evil. Unity is that which embraces and understands everything; consequently, it cannot be attained through negation. The present attempt to separate our spirit from that of the Occident is a tentative of spiritual suicide. . . . The present age has been dominated by the Occident, because the Occident had a mission to fulfil. We of the Orient should learn from the Occident. It is regrettable, of course, that we had lost the power of appreciating our own culture, and therefore did not know how to assign Western culture to its right place. But to say that it is wrong to co-operate with the West is to encourage the worst form of provincialism and can produce nothing but intellectual indigence. The problem is a world problem. No nation can find its own salvation by breaking away from others. We must all be saved, or we must all perish together."

"The follower of *swadeshi*," wrote Mr Gandhi, "never takes upon himself the vain task of trying to reform the world, for he believes that the world is moved and always

will be moved according to rules set by God. . . . One must not expect the people of one country to provide for the needs of another, even for philanthropic reasons, and if it were possible, it would not be desirable. . . . The true follower of *swadeshi* does not forget that every human being is his brother, but that it is incumbent on him to fulfil the task his particular environment has laid down for him. Just as we work out our salvation in the century in which we are born, we should serve the country in which we are born. The emancipation of our soul should be sought through religion and our own culture." Again he wrote: "We should avoid being intimate with those whose social customs are different from ours. We should not mingle in the lives of men or peoples whose ideals are different from ours. . . . Every man is a brook. Every nation is a river. They must follow their course, clear and pure, till they reach the Sea of Salvation, where all will blend."

And once even Mr C. F. Andrews—a passionate believer in the efficacy of *Satyagraha*—joined Dr Rabindranaht Tagore in protesting against the lengths to which Mr Gandhi's puritanism was going. To celebrate the anniversary of Tilak's death, Mr Gandhi ordered the burning of all foreign goods in Bombay. The religion of Nationalism became the religion of destruction. Some of the loveliest *saris* ever worn by the women of India were committed to the flames. Why, asked the *khaddar*-clad Andrews, were these treasures not given to the poor? Because, Mr Gandhi replied, these things are evil, and the poor, like the rich, must have their sense of honour. The things of the past, the things expressing India's dependence upon the foreigner, must perish. Out of the purgatorial flames would emerge the new India. The thunder of Tagorean paragraphs reverberated through the corridors of Santiniketan. But in Sabarmati a man passionate as Savonarola,

ruthless as Calvin answered the protests. " When all about me are dying for want of food, the only occupation permissible for me is to feed the hungry. India is a house on fire. It is dying of hunger, because it has no money to buy food with. . . . The circulation about her feet and legs has almost stopped. . . . To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. God created man to work for his food, and said that those who ate without work were thieves. We must think of millions who to-day are less than animals, almost in a dying state. Hunger is the argument that is drawing India to the spinning-wheel.

" The poet lives for the morrow, and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds in the early morning, singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. Those birds had their day's food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flown the previous night. But I have had the pain of watching birds who, for want of strength, could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. . . . Give them work that they may eat! ' Why should I, who have no need to work for food, spin? ' may be the question asked. Because I am eating what does not belong to me. I am living on the spoliation of my countrymen. Trace the source of every coin that finds its way into your pockets, and you will realize the truth of what I write. Every one must spin. Let Tagore spin, like the others. Let him burn his foreign clothes; that is the duty to-day. God will take care of the morrow. As it says in the *Gita*, ' Do right.' "

" Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty." Mr Gandhi would

pursue the Truth, whether it was beautiful or not. Though he seldom used the language of the Gospels, it was his resolve to establish a kingdom of righteousness; albeit a kingdom with fixed geographical frontiers, and if he found that the poet stood in the way of this kingdom he could declare, like Plato, an artist in spite of himself, that there was no accommodation for the poet in the Republic. The way of Truth is hard and harsh, and if Mr Gandhi preached a stern gospel, so also did the conquering Galilean. Here was a challenge to which no one could remain indifferent. Those who accepted the Brahman ideal of fulfilment rebelled with all their heart and mind. There came a time in the lives of Ruskin and Tolstoy, as in the life of Plato, when the artist parted company with the moralist. Mr Gandhi is a moralist pure and simple. What were purgatorial flames to Mr Gandhi were to others the annihilating flames of an inferno. The bonfires of Smithfield consumed men's bodies and saved their souls unto the life everlasting. The bonfires of Bombay consumed men's possessions only to make them worthier of a *khaddar* civilization. It was as though the Grand Inquisitor embraced *Satyagraha*, but could not forgo the illumination of the stake. Poverty of dress was to become poverty of spirit. When Mr Gandhi called upon the Indians of the Transvaal to cast their certificates into a cauldron filled with paraffin, the Johannesburg correspondent of the *Daily Mail* compared the incident to the Boston Tea Party. But there was to be no parallel to the bonfires of Bombay, until Mayor Thompson of Chicago ordered the destruction of books written by Englishmen.

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In April 1921, Lord Chelmsford bequeathed the responsibilities of viceregal office to Lord Reading. Lord Chief Justice and Ambassador Extraordinary in Washington, Lord Reading was peculiarly fitted for his great task. India

was drifting into lawlessness: an effective remedy, thought the former Lord Chief Justice, might be the proper application of laws already in existence. Indian and Irish agitation were making a deep impression upon the American mind: the former Ambassador must convince the world that in the British connection would lie India's road to freedom, justice and prosperity. Indians noted with satisfaction that he belonged to the same race as Edwin Montagu. Jew and Gentile were equals in England. Only the *Church Times* voiced dissent against the appointment of a Jewish Viceroy. Yet when Mr Gladstone appointed a Roman Catholic, Lord Ripon, it was to cost him many thousands of Nonconformist votes. Now the comparative lack of protests encouraged *swarajists*, whose Congress membership embraced all the minorities of India.

And then, by his own act, Lord Reading destroyed the advantage an ancient race had given him. Ran the Court Circular in Anglo-Indian newspapers: "His Excellency attended divine service at Simla this morning." The notice appeared again and again. So Christianity was the official religion of the official classes of India, whether they were Jew or Gentile. India does not readily forgive religious accommodation.

In due course Lord Reading received Mr Gandhi, and complained that the speeches and actions of the Ali brothers were not exactly conducive to non-violence. This Mr Gandhi denied, and when Lord Reading confronted him with long passages quoted from the speeches of the two brothers, Mr Gandhi argued that whatever threats they contained were purely metaphorical. Whereupon Maulana Mohammed Ali, at Mr Gandhi's bidding, publicly gave his word "neither directly nor indirectly to advocate violence at present or in the future, nor create an atmosphere of preparedness for violence, as long as we are

associated with the movement of non-violent non-co-operation." The Government was, therefore, compelled to drop the project of arresting the Maulana, and the Viceregal attempt to drive a wedge between the Mahatma and the Ali brothers failed. Hitherto, Mr Gandhi had been marching serenely towards the goal of *swaraj* within a year. He found people responsive to his protests against the sale of liquor and opium. Picketing a liquor-shop proved to be a successful means of courting imprisonment. He appealed, not without success, to the Parsi community, who were still the commercial backbone of the City of Bombay. He summoned the first Conference of Untouchables at Ahmedabad, and made it clear that his kingdom of righteousness would not come to pass until the stigma of Untouchability had been erased from the creed of every practising Hindu.

But the destiny of India was not his to control. Strong and primitive elements were at war. Riots broke out in unsuspected places. The Akalis became *satyagrahis* against the Mohants, and later *satyagrahis* against the Government, because the Government, for excellent reasons, had sided with the Mohants. Yet the Sikh dispute between Akali and Mohant had nothing to do with Mr Gandhi, and nothing to do with *swaraj*. While Mr Gandhi was busily burning foreign cloth in Bombay, the Khilafatists met at Karachi, and called upon good Mohammedans to refuse to submit to military service. Such a resolution, the authorities believed, would lead not to non-violence, but to a second Mutiny. The response was a revolt of the Moplahs in Malabar, who inflicted the most brutal tortures upon their Hindu neighbours. The Government replied by arresting the two Ali brothers and sentencing them both to terms of two years' imprisonment. From a sense of loyalty to his colleagues, Mr Gandhi promptly signed the Karachi

promises? The Court would fulfil its obligations, and risk the consequences. It so happened that the Prince's arrival was marked by extensive riots in the city. Angered by the wealthy merchants and officials who greeted the Prince, as though the Congress order for a *hartal* was an unpardonable interference, hooligans raided their homes and property, and more than fifty people were killed. Mr Gandhi was dismayed by what had happened. He rushed to the scene of rioting. The rioters cheered, and he commanded them to be silent. It was not in this manner that he wished a *hartal* to be observed. Clearly, the country was not ripe for civil disobedience. He sent out one appeal after another explaining his sorrow for the happenings in Bombay. Then he withdrew his sanction of the order inviting the Provinces to commence civil disobedience on their own responsibility. As a mark of his error and repentance, he imposed upon himself a weekly fast and day of silence.

With a heavy heart, Mr Gandhi left Bombay for the Sabarmati *ashram*. The National Congress was to meet in full session at Ahmedabad at Christmas. Three weeks before this, the Irish rebels had concluded their Treaty with the British Government. Less than six years had passed since the Easter Rebellion in Dublin; less than three since Eamon de Valera first proclaimed the Irish Republic. Four million Irishmen—in practice, a handful of Irishmen—humbled a great nation and empire. The methods of violence and guerrilla warfare were amazingly successful. Younger Congressmen resolved to advocate violence at the Ahmedabad Congress. Of what use, they asked, was a man who authorized civil disobedience and then, because of a mere riot in Bombay, withdrew his sanction?

Yet again Mr Gandhi was able to dominate Congress, though murmurs of discontent were ominous. The *swaraj*

resolution himself, and Congress was ready to move from non-co-operation to civil disobedience. But again Mr Gandhi held the Congress back. With the details of the Moplah revolt before him, how could he believe that India was ripe for the practice of civil disobedience? It must first learn the ethics of non-violence. Congress must explicitly disavow all revolutionary tendencies.

It was early November. Within two months the all-communities' struggle for *swaraj* should end. Time and the Government were against Mr Gandhi. His lieutenants urged him to commence civil disobedience. Then, pressed by the general committee of the Congress which met in Delhi, Mr Gandhi agreed that each province should, on its own responsibility, commence civil disobedience. The front trench in the civil disobedience manœuvre would be the non-payment of taxes. But those who practised civil disobedience were first to prove themselves loyal supporters of the *swadeshi* and *khaddar* programme. They must take a solemn vow to remain non-violent. Only then did Mr Gandhi give civil disobedience his blessing.

A fortnight later the Prince of Wales landed in Bombay. There was scarcely an Englishman in India who believed that the Prince should have made this tour. The reception given to the Duke of Connaught, while emphasizing the popularity and strength of the non-co-operation movement,– provoked the resentment of the European community. Throughout the year relations between Indians and Englishmen were far from happy. The Prince enjoyed in England and in the Dominions an unrivalled popularity. But what assurance was there that his popularity would extend to India? The King, however, in his Royal Proclamation had promised that his son should visit India within the year, and the Proclamation was now nearly two years old. Was there to be a Royal example of broken

taxes. They would defy Government on all occasions, and yet remain entirely non-violent. If the Bardoli experiment succeeded, other districts would follow its example. On 9th February, therefore, Mr Gandhi sent a letter to the harassed Viceroy, giving full details of what he intended to do. Lord Reading was allowed seven days within which to change the policy of the Government. It was another Gandhi " ultimatum " of the type that used to exasperate General Smuts. The Viceroy said nothing. He waited for Mr Gandhi to carry out his threat.

But before the seven days were up, an angry mob at Chauri-Chaura pursued a band of constables to the police barracks, set the police barracks on fire, and then burned the besieged policemen. The details of the riot were terrible, and though the quarrel between the mob and the police was certainly not manufactured by the volunteers of the Congress, Mr Gandhi felt himself responsible for what had happened. He told his Working Committee, already assembled at Bardoli, that he would have to call off the Civil Disobedience movement. It was not without difficulty that he won the Working Committee to his point of view. " I know," he declared, " that the drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound. The country will have gained by my humiliation and confession of error. . . . For confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt and leaves the surface cleaner and brighter. I feel stronger for my confession. . . . The tragedy of Chauri-Chaura is really the index-finger. It shows the way India may easily go if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence, it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace, and not think of starting mass civil disobedience

which he witnessed during the Bombay riots "stunk in his nostrils." None the less, he was ready to prepare a fresh policy of mass civil disobedience, and he called upon every Indian to join the National Volunteer Corps and court arrest. The applause with which these words were received caused Maulana Hasrat Mohani to urge a change in the Congress creed. Already the Moslem League had voted for a Republic. Maulana Hasrat Mohani, therefore, rose to propose that Congress should fight officially for the establishment of the United States of India, independent and republic. And yet again Mr Gandhi declared himself ready to maintain the British connection. What he wanted, he said, was a Round Table Conference between the Government and the Congress; only it must be "a real Conference, where only equals are to sit and there is not a single beggar." The young Congressmen introduced their motion approving of violence, which they failed to carry, and when the delegates dispersed they left Mr Gandhi as the virtual dictator of his party. On Christmas Eve the Prince of Wales entered Calcutta. The local Congressmen proclaimed a *hartal*, and the Prince drove through almost completely deserted streets.

Prisons were filling rapidly. The strength of non-co-operation, the authorities learned, could be gauged by the number of men and women willing to go to prison. "You cannot indict a nation," cried Edmund Burke. "You cannot imprison a nation," proclaimed the Congressmen. Sooner or later, imprisonments would reach their saturation-point. They would reach it, in all probability, when Mr Gandhi overcame his fears and started a policy of active civil disobedience. He prepared his plans. He decided to make the preliminary experiment in a particular locality, and that locality happened to be Bardoli, one of the richest districts of Gujerat. The people of Bardoli would pay no

until we are sure of peace being retained. . . . Let the opponent glory in our humiliation and so-called defeat. It is better to be charged with cowardice than to be guilty of denial of our oath and sin against God." And Mr Gandhi prepared himself for a long penitential fast.

Disapproval in the Working Committee found stronger expression among the rank and file. For the second time, Mr Gandhi had prepared followers for civil disobedience and then called off the movement. Was he shirking issues? India is a land of rioting. Did he expect an era of peace? Did he believe that love would move the hearts of penniless criminals in the Indian cities? Were the Bombay riots and Chauri-Chaura barefaced excuses? Young men argued that they were. The apostle of *Satyagraha* was a vain leader after all. Mr Gandhi divined the course of feeling directed against him. " Let us be truthful," he insisted. " If it is by force that we wish to gain *swaraj*, let us drop non-violence, and offer such violence as we may. It would be a manly, honest and sober attitude, and no one can then accuse us of the terrible charge of hypocrisy. If, in spite of all my warning, the majority did not believe in our goal, although they accepted it without a single material change, I would ask them to realize their responsibility. They are not bound to rush to civil disobedience, but to settle down to the quiet work of construction. If we do not take care, we are likely to be drowned in the waters whose depths we do not know. . . . Those who do not believe in the creed should surely retire from the Congress." But words are seldom so effective as gesture. The young men were unmoved. Mr Gandhi's influence began to wane. Then the Government came to the rescue. On the night of 10th March the police arrived at the Sabarmati *ashram*. Mr Gandhi was placed under arrest.

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The mean and dusty streets of Ahmedabad seethed with excitement. Journalists from all parts of India crowded into the few hotels the city provided. Long before the accused left the Sabarmati Gaol, the little court of the Sessions Judge was filled. When at last the accused entered, the whole Court rose. The Advocate-General indicted the accused on statements contained in various articles. He has written of a "fight to the finish. We want *swaraj*; we want the Government to yield to popular will. We ask for no quarter and expect none." The accused has "preached disaffection towards the Government and has openly instigated others to overthrow it."

The accused pleaded guilty. He asked permission to speak. "I wanted to avoid violence. I want to avoid violence. Non-violence is the first article of my creed. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I considered had done an irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth, when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it, and I am therefore here to submit, not to a light penalty, but to the highest penalty. . . . The only course open to you, Judge, is either to resign your post, or inflict on me the severest penalty."

Whereupon the Judge acknowledged that the accused's plea of guilty had eased his task. But what of the penalty? "It is impossible to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen you are a great patriot and a great leader. . . ." The Judge paused. "You will not consider it unreasonable, I think, to be classed with Mr Tilak." Tilak was sentenced to a term of six years' imprisonment. "If the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and

release you, no one will be better pleased than I." The accused was honoured to be thus associated with Mr Tilak.

The trial ends. The prisoner leaves the court in triumph. A car drives him through crowded streets, over the Sabarmati bridge, past the National University of which he is Chancellor, and through the compounds of the *ashram*, where faithful followers wait to receive his blessing. Then, almost immediately, the car enters the precincts of the gaol, and for the first time Mr Gandhi is a convict in his own country.

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On the whole, Mr Gandhi was happy in prison. Within a few weeks he was moved from the Sabarmati Gaol to the Yeravda Gaol, in the heart of the Mahratta country. He found time for meditation and for writing. He dictated most of the material for his autobiography. That work shows him in a detached mood, freed at last from all the pressing needs of the moment, sorrowfully regretting the paucity of time he could devote to the ministry of teaching and the ministry of healing. He passes over his achievements in India with a brief survey. It is on his career in South Africa that he prefers to dwell. If he was not in the first rank of world figures before 1920, he knows that the years before 1914 were the best and the really creative years of his life.

The months passed into years. M. Romain Rolland wrote a biography of Mahatma Gandhi, which kept his name before the *intelligentsia* of Europe and America. But in India the greatness of that name began to fade. Other men struggled for the leadership of the Congress. The political scene in India and England changed. Mr Lloyd George rid himself of Mr Edwin Montagu, the last genuine Liberal to remain among his Coalition colleagues. A few months later, the Conservatives rid themselves of Mr

Lloyd George. Then Kemal Pasha, whose victories had led directly to Mr Lloyd George's defeat, did a surprising thing. He deposed the Sultan. He changed the *Sheik-ul-Islam* into a Commission of Religious Affairs. He renounced all claim to the holy places of Islam. He dissociated himself entirely from the affairs of Mohammedans outside Turkey. At one swoop the cause of the Indian Khilafatists was gone, and inevitably the Khilafatist plank in the Congress programme rotted away.

The cause of non-co-operation itself underwent a change. Mr C. R. Das and his followers entered the Councils with the avowed purpose of wrecking the reforms, and Mr Das had come gradually to acquire the leadership of the Congress. Other politicians, growing tired of a purely negative attitude, entered the Councils in order to work the reforms, however unsatisfactory they had proved to be. They were ready to offer "responsive co-operation." Whatever excuse the politicians had to give, there is no doubt that the Legislature attracted them. The opportunity of confounding the advocate of the Government's policy in debate was too good to be missed. It was not long before Mr Vitalbhai Patel, an uncompromising *swarajist*, agreed to be elected to the Presidentship of the Legislative Assembly—to become, in fact, the Speaker of India's House of Commons—and to make one of the boldest assumptions ever recorded of strict impartiality. Mrs Sarojini Naidu and her friends prepared the elaborate wig and robes of the first Indian to be President of the Legislative Assembly, and patriots noted with no little satisfaction that the materials were mostly of *khaddar*, and all of them, however richly coloured, were true to the *swadeshi* type.

Then, suddenly, in January 1924—the month in which Lenin died and England witnessed her first Labour Government—Mr Gandhi became desperately ill with appendicitis.

An urgent operation was necessary. The prisoner was given his choice of doctors. He chose Colonel Maddock, the surgeon at the Poona Military Hospital. The faith of some of his close followers was shaken. Here was the man who detested the " medical morals " of the West, and who once saved a sufferer from appendicitis by ordering him to undergo a prolonged fast. And, if the operation was necessary, why an English doctor? Clearly, he had lost his spiritual ascendancy over the body, and a Brahman ascetic urged him, when he recovered, to seek the solitude of a cave. " I plead guilty," the patient replied. " Unfortunately for me, I am far from perfect. I am simply a humble aspirant for perfection. I know my way to it also. But knowing the way is not reaching its end. . . . As I hold that my illness was a result of infirmity of thought or mind, so do I concede that my submission to the surgical operation was an additional infirmity of mind. If I was absolutely free from egoism, I would have resigned myself to the inevitable; but I wanted to live in the present body. Complete detachment is not a mechanical process. One has to grow into it by patient toil and prayer."

He " wanted to live in the present body." The cheerfulness which surrounded him in the Poona Hospital showed that. A retired English soldier, aged eighty-two, walked into the patient's room every day to cheer him up. " Can I do anything for you, Mr Gandhi? " " Please pray for me," was the answer. But the old soldier was already praying. There came inquiries from every part of the country. Telegrams of congratulation poured into the surgery. And when Mr Gandhi was a little better, the broad and kindly figure of the Superintendent of the Yeravda Gaol stood at the bedside. The patient was still a State prisoner.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Leader in Retreat

MR GANDHI took a long time to recover. The Viceroy and the new Secretary of State for India, Lord Olivier, agreed, however, that the remainder of his sentence should be remitted. Accordingly, he left Poona a free man and sought to recuperate in a Parsi's house at Juhu—the "Brighton of Bombay." Lord Reading made no references to Mr Gandhi's illness in his speech to the Central Legislature, and this omission was at once accepted as an indication that the change of Government in London would not alter the course of the Viceroy's Administration. The omission, though deeply resented by Nationalist opinion at the time, did not hurt or worry Mr Gandhi any more than did his automatic disbarring by the Inner Temple for conviction on a criminal charge. There were, indeed, other indications that Lord Reading would carry on as before. The Prime Minister seemed to have forgotten that in 1911 the Indian National Congress elected him to be its President; only the death of his wife had prevented him from going out to India and from giving—who knows?—an entirely new direction to the activities of this famous party. Lord Olivier accepted wholeheartedly Lord Morley's dictum that the primary duty of a Government is to govern; and when officials pressed for a revival of the 1818 Bengal Ordinance, which permitted incarceration without trial, Lord Olivier gave an unhesitant sanction. All things considered, it was well that the new Government preserved the *status quo*. Nothing is more fatal than an Indian policy of vacillation, and before the year was out, the Conservatives were in once more. In the office of Lord Olivier sat the robust, the

slightly intolerant and—as Indians were to judge him—the far from sympathetic Earl of Birkenhead.

There was little that Mr Gandhi could do. Mr Das stood at the head of a new *swaraj* party, which entered the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils, displayed its cleverness and its perpetual susceptibility to insults, and was never convinced whether it ought to be occasionally helpful or consistently obstructionist. The game it was playing with the authorities Mr Gandhi could neither play nor wish to play. Its members had forgotten the need for Hindu-Mohammedan unity; they had forgotten their *charkas*; they had forgotten India's dumb masses. They were members of the *intelligentsia* who represented urban interests. They were—so ran the complaint alike in official circles and in the Sabarmati *ashram*—intelligent but dangerous parasites, flourishing upon the credulity of the poor. If they spoke the language of democracy they had for the agricultural interests of India a contempt born of ignorance. It may be that Mr Gandhi knew not the true reasons of the *ryots*' poverty. He was not to know that the population of India is increasing at the rate of three millions a year, or that since his birth in Porbandar a population equal to that of modern Germany has been added to the "dumb masses" of India. And even if he knew, he had not the equipment of mind or method to lead the way to drastic agrarian reforms. But he could engender a spirit of pity in which other men might labour. The *swarajists* behaved as though destruction must precede reconstruction. Mr Gandhi, on the contrary, believed that there could be no reconstruction without regeneration. He realized that this was no time for a revival of non-co-operation. He wanted to create for India a new spiritual solidarity. He wanted to send his countrymen once more to their *charkas*, and he wanted to achieve Hindu-Mohammedan unity:

though the Khilafatist cause was dead, the need for unity remained. Finally, he wanted to remove Untouchability. Untouchability was a cancer in the mystical body of Hinduism, and a just cause for the resentment of all Mohammedans, Parsis and Christians. Not only was there the Untouchability of the Hindu without caste: there was the wretched condition of the coolie and the menial. He wanted something deeper than the political democracy of the West. He sought to capture the grand Mohammedan belief in the brotherhood of men, the equality of all men, of high or low estate, in the eyes of their God. His first ambition, therefore, when he regained his health and left the golden sands of Juhu for the *ashram*, was to convene a Unity Conference. He invited not only the leading Hindus and Mohammedans, but the leaders of most other communities as well. The Metropolitan of India—Dr Foss Westcott, whose name is as famous in India as was his father's in England—willingly accepted an invitation to attend. Mr Gandhi's contribution was a three weeks' fast. Members of the *ashram* and other friends begged him to abandon the project. He would not stand the ordeal, they said: a fast which ends in death is equivalent to suicide. But he refused to be dissuaded. The fast began, and Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsis and Christians flocked to the bedside. Members of the various communities prayed over him. There was a nation-wide hysteria, and under its influence the Hindus and Mohammedans set up a Conciliation Board of fifteen members, which was to meet whenever there were communal difficulties ahead. The three weeks ended. Mr Gandhi appeared to be reasonably fit and well; and the members of the Unity Conference dispersed. But hysteria soon subsides. It was not long before Hindus and Mohammedans came to grief again, and the efforts of the Unity Conference seemed to have been made in vain.

Mr Gandhi's knowledge of psychology may be deep, but it has some curious limitations. The three weeks' fast benefited no one, unless it was the man who underwent the suffering. The belief that fasting promotes an inner purity and so leads to a greater acquisition of spiritual strength is not confined to Eastern countries; and leaders, like followers, may discover that we influence people, and so situations, more by what we are than by what we do.

At the end of the year, the Indian National Congress met at Belgaum, in the southern Mahratta country. It elected Mr Gandhi to be its President. But more than once the President of the Congress has been eclipsed by more brilliant lieutenants, and at Belgaum it was Mr Das, not Mr Gandhi, who held the stage. Mrs Annie Besant, who appeared on the platform and thus marked her reconciliation to the Congress, tried to win assent to her Commonwealth of India Bill. Mr Das, however, had said all he wished to say. The fate of the Commonwealth of India Bill scarcely concerned him. The President showed a like indifference. He was in no mood for politics. Why should he be, when India had not yet learned the true value of the spinning-wheel? "Spin and weave" was the *motif* of his Presidential address. Followers listened with disappointment: "Mr Gandhi is not the man he was." Before long, Mrs Annie Besant, despairing of wisdom among Indians, left for England. She would not return to India until the Labour Party had undertaken to sponsor the Commonwealth of India Bill; and this eventually the Labour Party—as the Opposition, anxious for any weapon with which to attack the Government; as a party, little better informed on Indian affairs than the Conservatives and the Liberals—agreed to do.

In the following June, Mr Das died. Mr Gandhi hurried to Calcutta and led the great funeral procession to the

burning *ghats*. Yet he showed no disposition to accept Mr Das's mantle. He returned to the Sabarmati *ashram*, and was soon engrossed in its manifold activities. He would act as adviser to mill-workers in Ahmedabad, pay daily visits to sufferers from smallpox, walk across the road to inspect his National University, and make himself accessible to all who wished to see him, whether the visitor was a chaplain sojourning in Ahmedabad, a journalist from Bombay, or Dame Clara Butt during one of her frequent tours to India and the Far East. Whether the time would come for another offer of *Satyagraha* he did not know. But, at least, he would be ready with a well-disciplined army of *satyagrahis*. During the long months when he faded almost completely from the political picture, he was training his young men. Life in the *ashram* became more rigorously monastic. Unsuitable material was rejected. Yet those who embraced the discipline and could stand the strain were willingly accepted. Many doubts may have flitted across Mr Gandhi's mind when Miss Lilian Slade applied for membership of the *ashram*. The life, he told her, was hard. But Miss Slade is a woman of keen intelligence. She counted the cost before she made her final decision. As a girl, she lived with her father in the Admiral's House in Bombay. She belonged to a generation of "Anglo-Indians" which observed a strict etiquette, and became almost as caste-ridden as other communities in the midst of which it lived. Miss Slade might dine with the wives of the Governor, the Chief Justice, the Bishop and the Commanding Officer at Colaba; but other invitations would have to be scrutinized rather carefully. The India of the Indians was as far as possible withheld from her. Yet it was to this India that she responded. She felt that the artificial barriers of "Anglo-India" were an evil which required an atonement. She would offer herself

in expiation of the wrongs her countrymen had committed. She has since become famous as Miraben.

In the Legislative Assembly—far from the influence of Mr Gandhi—men were debating feverishly whether the value of the rupee should be one-and-sixpence or one-and-fourpence. Technical problems of finance were involved, but the *swarajists* were convinced that it was a simple problem, after all. The Government, they argued, was pushing up the value of the rupee by twopence in order to cripple Indian industry for the sake of the British tax-payer. The vernacular Press was loud with discontent and full of fiery denunciation of Sir Basil Blackett, the Finance Member. Sir Basil discovered that he had great parliamentary gifts. He turned the offensive against his opponents in the Legislative Assembly. He toured the country. He was doing what members of the Government ought to have done long ago, and what they had failed to do simply because the older members of the Indian Civil Service were trained to be good bureaucrats and not Parliamentarians. Yet, after the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, only first-class Parliamentarians could have dealt effectively with the *swarajists*. Indian Civil Servants who complained that Sir Basil Blackett was mixing himself up with politics simply did not understand the trend of events in India.

Agitation over the one-and-sixpenny rupee was but the outward and visible sign of a widespread discontent. Subsequent events have shown the unsatisfactory condition of the economic fabric of India. Later statistics have revealed that India's population is excessively large. There can be no solution of the problem it offers without drastic agrarian reform or, failing a deliberate curtailment of the population, bold schemes of colonization in other parts of the world. Against such schemes, Australia and South Africa, guardians of vast territories thirsting for the

cultivator, have set their face. In the absence of one good rallying cry, discontent was to take many forms. Relations between Hindus and Mohammedans grew worse. Mr Gandhi had tried to heal the breach, and he had failed.

An offer of help, however, came from a most unexpected quarter. Lord Irwin had been Viceroy for only a few months. His boat arrived at Bombay on Good Friday, 1926. He insisted that no ceremonial should violate the religious sanctity of the day. He left his boat quietly to attend the Good Friday services in the little church on Malabar Hill. When the services were over, he returned to the boat, which lay anchored in midstream. Not until the following day did he permit the pageantry of a Viceregal arrival at the Apollo Bundar. As soon as possible, he left for Delhi, and then for Simla. He was quietly but anxiously judging the position. Almost the first letters he sent to his friends in Yorkshire contained appeals for funds for an Anglican church at New Delhi. There was no hint of any new orientation of policy. But rumours spread through India that some of the Viceregal pomp had gone, and that the new Viceroy was slowly but effectively winning friends. In July, the Chelmsford Club—the first and the most important of the comparatively new clubs which permit an Indian as well as a European membership—invited the Viceroy to be its guest at dinner. It was at this dinner that he made his first important speech. It was an appeal to Hindu and Mohammedan leaders to " throw themselves with ardour into a new form of communal work and into a nobler struggle—the fight for toleration."

" I appeal," he said, " in the name of religion, because I can appeal to nothing nobler, and because religion is the language of the soul, and it is a change of soul that India needs to-day. . . . Whatever, indeed, be the creed that men profess, such creed is the attempt men make to know the

forces that lie beyond human vision, and learn the secret of how human nature may be refined, and, in so doing, realize the ultimate purposes of their existence . . . there can surely be no greater tragedy than that religion, which thus should be the expression and the support of man's highest instincts, should be prostituted by an alliance with actions through which these instincts are distorted and disgraced."

Lord Irwin had made a profound impression. The old Khilafatists and the inmates of the Sabarmati *ashram* believed that they were ready to respond. Yet few could bear the thought that, after all, it was the Viceroy, the representative of a foreign *raj*, the head of the " satanic " Government, who offered mediation. An alien—sympathetic, kindly, conscientious, but none the less an alien—stepped in to accomplish a task the Indians should have accomplished for themselves long ago. There was bitterness in the air. The breach was never healed, and the Viceroy turned reluctantly to other problems.

Lord Irwin sought the acquaintance of most of the leaders and politicians who came to Delhi. And yet for a long time Mr Gandhi was never of their number. In a chaplain's bungalow, in the Calcutta flat of a Scottish *jutewallah*, in the ornate mansion of a Parsi merchant, one heard the same cry: " Gandhi is finished." He still toured the country, but it was to spread the gospel of *Khaddar*. Hindu-Mohammedan unity, as his weekly articles in *Young India* were to show, remained uppermost in his mind, but he propounded no new schemes. Instead, he drew to his *ashram* Mohammedans who did not want separate electorates at all, men who would live according to their religion, but not on their religion. Mr Abbas Tyabji, a venerable figure with a flowing beard, became in the *ashram* the chief representative of the so-called

Nationalist Mohammedans. In the Congress itself the chief representative was Dr Ansari, a surgeon with a distinguished record both in India and in London: but in these days the *ashram* was most emphatically not the focal point of the Congress. Even when Miss Katherine Mayo published her *Mother India*, and sent the country into paroxysms of rage, Mr Gandhi's voice was scarcely heard above the tumult. *Mother India*, he said, was a drain-inspector's report, a book for Englishmen to forget and for Indians to remember. He would not condemn it out of hand. His devotion to Truth was too great for any uncompromising condemnation. The *ashram* would not be tyrannized by an angry public opinion.

When at last Lord Irwin and Mr Gandhi met each other —in the late autumn of 1927—the storm provoked by *Mother India* was dying down, and agitation over the one-and-sixpenny rupee was to give place to a still more violent controversy. The Government had appointed the Simon Commission.

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It may be that, when Lord Birkenhead accepted the office of Secretary of State for India, he believed it possible to make to Indian history a contribution as fateful as his negotiations with the leaders of the Irish Rebellion. "I have signed my political death-warrant," he told Michael Collins immediately after he had appended his signature to the Irish Treaty. "But I have signed my actual death-warrant," Michael Collins replied. For this parleying with the rebels—the one superb act of statesmanship in his short and feverish life—Lord Birkenhead provoked the anger of reactionary Conservatives. He had smarted under the cry of "Judas" as he was about to enter the Carlton Club meeting which unseated Mr Lloyd George. His party would never again restore him to full favour; and yet

he had every reason to be proud of what he had done. Would India provide him with a still greater opportunity of displaying a truly Liberal statesmanship? It was an integral part of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms that a Commission should be set up within ten years to examine the working of these reforms and to report to Parliament. There is little doubt that a Parliamentary Commission was intended. In actual fact, the Government was not bound to appoint this Commission before 1929. In the summer of 1927, however, Lord Birkenhead was making arrangements for a Commission. Why? Because he wanted to make a spectacular success of his *régime* at the India Office before the swing of the political pendulum brought the Labour Party once more to power? Because he was being pressed by a Viceroy who believed that the cure for irresponsibility is more responsibility? Or because, as many Indians were arguing, Lord Birkenhead and his colleagues believed that a Commission would report in favour of a return to the Morley-Minto reforms? The story of Lord Birkenhead's administration at the India Office is yet to be published.

In an atmosphere poisoned by misunderstanding and mistrust, the Viceroy prepared to announce the decision of the British Government. He invited all the leaders to Delhi. An invitation was sent to Mr Gandhi, who, though no longer an active politician, believed it to be his duty to accept. Invitations were sent to the Ali brothers, to Mrs Naidu and Mrs Annie Besant. Less anxious invitations were dispatched to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other spokesmen of Moderate opinion, for it had not occurred to rulers in Whitehall and Simla that the Moderates would resent, no less than the Congressmen, the establishment of a Commission that was Parliamentary and, therefore, All-White. Members of an alien *raj* were to sit in judgment upon

educated statesmen and politicians, and to decide whether or not their country was fitted for a greater measure of political reform.

There was no one to complain against the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon. He was a great lawyer, and as such he could endear himself not only to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Pandit Motilal Nehru, but to Mr Gandhi as well. He was a Liberal. He was tolerant, Congressmen noticed, to rebels, for he had refrained from arresting Sir Edward Carson when it was his plain duty so to do. He was independent-minded: his opposition to Conscription during the War showed that he did not fear to pursue an unpopular course. Approval of the other members of the Commission, however, was less marked. One was the Viceroy's brother-in-law. Two were Peers who had no hope of entering a Cabinet. In fact, no one who had any political prospects in London agreed to go out to India with Sir John Simon. Indians called them a commission of nonentities. Their appointment, so they argued, showed that British concern for Indian welfare was not genuine. It was a foregone conclusion that Congressmen and other Radicals would have nothing to do with them, and Congress opposition became so violent that Mr Vitalbhai Patel, as President of the Legislative Assembly, wondered whether he could still maintain the assumed attitude of impartiality. When the Indian National Congress met in full session in Madras, Mr Srinivasa Ayengar, aided and abetted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, successfully introduced a resolution declaring complete independence to be India's goal. It was not a resolution which older men could welcome. They had advanced no further in thought than the attainment of Dominion Status. Like Mr Gandhi, living in semi-retirement, they secretly wished for nothing more ambitious. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, boasting of his visit to Soviet Russia

and appealing with his strange personality and his ruthless energy to the youth of India, preached a gospel the older men could not understand. In the stress of the moment, however, they supported the Independence resolution. It was necessary to deepen the national sense of indignation. A year would pass before the Congress met in full session again. Some one among them must find a formula whereby they could evade the issue of Independence *versus* Dominion Status.

It was an ugly situation, and for a long time it was difficult to tell who were the friends of the Government and who were not.

Yet the Government pursued its policy undismayed. Lord Birkenhead believed that he had spoken the last word against the appointment of Indians to the Commission, and in a speech in the House of Lords he actually challenged Indian leaders " to put forward their own suggestions for a Constitution, to indicate to us the form which, in their judgment, any reform of the Constitution should take." He thought, and so did those who heard his speech in the House of Lords, that the challenge would go unanswered. It was a serious miscalculation.

And yet the controversy over the appointment of the Simon Commission succeeded in emphasizing India's communal disunity—a fact which pleased those who believed in the policy *divide et impera*, but did not please a Viceroy who was still willing to heal the breach between the great religious communities. The politicians were ready for the fray, and in the Legislative Assembly, Lala Lajpat Rai moved the resolution for the boycott of the Commission. It was a first-class debate. Mr M. C. Rajah, representative of the Untouchables, opposed the motion. The Mohammedans heard him and were delighted; partly because theirs is a religion of human brotherhood; chiefly because,

as a community, they were not siding with the caste Hindus. Sir Basil Blackett sat on a Ministerial bench, anxious to provoke his antagonists. The Opposition enjoyed his sallies, but a reporter who sat in the Press Gallery immediately above the Ministerial benches was so moved to wrath that he hurled an attaché-case at Sir Basil's head. Sir Basil, though stunned, was not seriously hurt. An Indian clerk telegraphed to the India Office: " the Finance Minister never entirely lost conscientiousness." And as friends lifted him from his seat, Sir Basil Blackett murmured: *me truncus illapsus cerebro sustulerat, nisi Faunus icti dextra levasset*. So Horace was heard at last in the arena of the Legislative Assembly. His lines, like Mr Patel's *swadeshi* wig and gown, were an ironic tribute to the Mother of Parliaments.

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On the morning of 3rd February 1928, Sir John Simon and his six colleagues landed in Bombay. A monster procession of protests had been prepared for them. The youths of Bombay were astir before four in the morning. At four-thirty they were outside the offices of the *Times of India* burning copies of the European journal. Then came torrents of rain, which no one expected to see until June ushered in the monsoon months. Enthusiasm chilled. Only scattered bands of youths waited to wave their black flags and to cry: " Simon, go back! " The leaders, however, had better work to do than to organize protest meetings; for while the *Statesman* and the *Times of India* declared that nothing was to be gained from a policy of negation, they were hurrying to an All-Parties Conference. They would forestall the recommendations of the Simon Commission. They would themselves indicate the path to the new reforms. Accordingly, the All-Parties Conference appointed a sub-committee to draft a new Constitution for

India. On that committee sat the two Kashmiri cousins, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the one a Congressman, the other a Moderate. They had taken up Lord Birkenhead's challenge.

Even when he was the Law Member in Lord Reading's Administration, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru sought leisure so that he might study the conditions for a new Constitution for India. He saw that, somehow or other, the ambitions of the Indian States would have to be reconciled with the ambitions of British India. The goal of policy in British India, it was clear enough, remained Dominion Status. But the India of the States was bound to the British Crown by many conflicting treaties and *sanads*. These treaties and *sanads* were almost without exception with the rulers of the States, and few indeed were the Princes content enough to rule as limited monarchs. The Princes professed their loyalty to the Crown. But they were, first and last, the sons of India. Like the meanest of their subjects, they could respond to the call of patriotism, and certainly the Indian States' subjects could not be rigorously barred from the agitation of British India. The destinies of British India and the Indian States are interlocked. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, therefore, believed that the solution of India's constitutional problem lay in the formation of an All-India Federation. He confessed as much to Pandit Motilal Nehru and to other members of the Sub-Committee. Whether he quickly won them to his point of view, we do not know. The Sub-Committee held innumerable meetings and encountered endless difficulties. There was no sign of a report. Opponents began to sneer. Lord Birkenhead was right: the Indian parties could not produce an agreed report on Constitutional Reform.

Meanwhile, Sir John Simon and his colleagues were making their preliminary survey of India. It hurt Lord

Irwin that they could not meet Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr Jayakar, Mr Jinnah and Sir Chimanlal Setalvad. How could they avoid obtaining a distorted view of the Indian problem? Sir John Simon soon grasped the difficulties and the weaknesses of his position. Advisory committees he must have. He was conciliatory and friendly. He did all he could to destroy the disparity of status between members of the Commission and those who were prepared to co-operate with it. It was due largely to the good impression he was making that, in the end, eight of the nine Provincial Councils agreed to co-operate with the Commission. Only a narrow majority prevented the co-operation of the Legislative Assembly.

Both the Viceroy and Sir John Simon saw, however, that nothing could convert the Commission into a success. To begin with, the Commission was not empowered to examine the relations between the States and British India. Yet the Princes held the key to the situation. Lord Irwin, struggling with the manifold tasks of Government; Sir John Simon, endeavouring to point the way to genuine reform and progress; Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, determined to show that future reforms must be primarily of Indian manufacture; all had in the end something of the same vision. That vision was co-operation between the Princes and the statesmen of British India. If such a vision could be made real, plainly the Simon Commission was an inadequate vehicle. The only solution would be a Round Table Conference. Mr Gandhi and the Congressmen were right. Week after week Lord Irwin explained the position to Lord Birkenhead. Lest Lord Birkenhead should find the waste-paper basket an easier means of disposing of Viceregal communications than a rustless file, Lord Irwin wrote as frequently to the Prime Minister. He was trying to establish order out of chaos.

Then, after several hectic months, the All-Parties Sub-Committee confounded the critics by producing an agreed report which, under the name of the Nehru Report, was to become a landmark in a troubled period of Indian history. Its recommendations were not so much the clauses of a draft Bill as an "indication of the principles involved, which it will be for the Parliamentary draftsman to put into shape." The Report assumed the conferment of Dominion Status. It demanded a Central Government responsible to a Central Legislature. It pointed the way—delicately, but firmly—to Federation. It suggested the separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency. It recommended the elevation of the North-West Frontier Province to the status of a full Governor's Province. Finally, it urged the creation of joint electorates throughout India. There was to be no reservation of seats for the Mohammedans, except in Provinces where they were in a minority. In other words, the Report crystallized the reforms which Indians of all parties in India were demanding. So doing, it returned Lord Birkenhead's challenge. Within two months, Lord Birkenhead retired from the Cabinet.

And yet India was not even now to speak with united voice. Mr Srinivasa Sastri and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru noted with dismay that the authors of the Nehru Report assumed that the resolution in favour of complete independence did not exist. They were putting back the clock of progress. Mohammedans—both those who supported the boycott of the Simon Commission and those who opposed it—discovered that their cherished right of separate electorates in the Central Legislature and in all Provinces was put in peril. Leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha argued that the unity of India was impaired by the creation of new and almost exclusively Mohammedan Provinces. "Communal electorates are bad enough," cried its President,

Dr Moonje, " but communal Provinces would be the death-blow to Indian nationalism." In vain the All-Parties leaders tried to reconcile what they had done with the ambitions of the new Youth Movement. There was another All-Parties Conference, which passed this resolution:

> " Without restricting the liberty of action of those political parties whose goal is complete independence, this Conference declares:
>
> (1) that the form of government to be established in India should be responsible, that is to say, a government in which the executive should be responsible to a popularly elected legislature possessing full and plenary powers;
> (2) that such form of government shall in no event be lower than that of any self-governing dominion."

Such accommodation, however, did not satisfy the needs of the younger men. They were ready for war. The example of Soviet Russia inspired them. A godless Russia led the way, for until young India has dethroned God, how is it to deliver itself from the shackles of communalism? Such shackles have the strength of steel. Mohammedans argued more strongly than before in favour of separate electorates. A new Province of Sind became a nightmare to orthodox Hindus. Communalism, in fact, wrecked the Nehru Report. Here were forces deeper than the boycott of an All-White Commission. Here were enthroned those very evils which alone hindered the attainment of *swaraj*. There was not a leader who could dominate the situation. Then, in despair, men looked for guidance from an individual who, for the past four years, had been living in semi-retirement. The stage was set for the return of Mahatma Gandhi.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Lord Irwin's Invitation

THE real work of all political parties is done behind the scenes. When Mr Gandhi arrived in Calcutta a few days before the annual meeting of the Congress in full session, he saw almost at once what was to be done. Communalism apart, the Nehru Report represented a stage in the demand for *swaraj*. Beyond that stage was complete Independence —the *purna swaraj* to which in the previous year Mr Srinivasa Ayengar and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had officially committed the Congress. If Mr Gandhi had attempted to ignore Mr Ayengar's resolution—foolish though it may have been—he would have split the Congress from top to bottom; and the anti-Gandhi secessionists, as everybody knew, would soon show impatience with the methods of non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience. The freedom of India, like the freedom of Ireland, would then be attempted by the methods of guerrilla warfare. Congress volunteers would intimidate the English civilians of Bombay and Calcutta. They would spread disaffection among the Indian troops and urge them to rise against a perilously small British garrison. To win the freedom of India with the sword, it seemed, was easy. To win it by the suffering of *satyagrahis* was doubtful; and who but a saint welcomes suffering as an end in itself? Mr Gandhi was summoned to Calcutta for no other purpose than to prevent an almost inevitable split. Only the call of danger brought him once more out of the *ashram*. He came in response not only to his former colleagues, but to those Moderates who had associated themselves with the Nehru Report. Yet, having left his *ashram*, he would rule on his

own terms. He would not let India forget that he wished to inaugurate his Kingdom of Righteousness. The culture of *khaddar*, the educational methods of the National University at Ahmedabad once again came to the fore.

Mr Gandhi's work is seen in the main resolution passed by the Calcutta Congress after Mr Ayengar and his friends had said all that an Opposition could say:

"This Congress," ran the resolution, "having considered the Constitution recommended by the All-Parties Committee Report, welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems, and, whilst adhering to the resolution relating to complete Independence passed at the Madras Congress, adopts the Constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, especially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country; provided, however, that the Congress shall not be bound by the Constitution if it is not accepted on or before December the thirty-first, 1930, and provided, further, that in the event of non-acceptance by the British Parliament of the Constitution by that date, the Congress will revive non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and every other aid to the Government. . . . Nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the propaganda for familiarizing people with the goal of independence in so far as it does not conflict with the prosecution of the campaign for the adoption of the Report."

It was a strange resolution, and writers of leading articles and special correspondents, not appreciating the fact that younger men were ready to unseat the old "extremists," made ample fun of the Congress's decision. Mr Gandhi, they assumed, would remain a convinced believer in the British Empire until midnight on New Year's Eve. At one A.M., however, he would be the champion of Indian Independence. There was only a year within which the British Government could adopt the Nehru Report, and a year was not enough. Sir John Simon and his colleagues were in India again for their second tour. They would not complete their investigations until the early summer, and

it was certain that their Report would not be ready until 1930—the first year of India's Independence. But the Congress resolution was not so naïve as it was made to appear. It did not say that on 1st January 1931 the Congress would revive non-violent non-co-operation for the sake of independence. It was as likely to be non-violent non-co-operation for the sake of the Nehru Report. Moreover, the advocates of independence were free to carry on their propaganda, provided it did not interfere with the propaganda for the Nehru Report. In other words, propaganda for Independence was not to interfere with propaganda for Dominion Status. The League against Imperialism was not far wrong when it numbered Mr Gandhi among the Imperialists.

When Mr Gandhi returned to the Sabarmati *ashram* the torchlight of publicity was thrown upon almost all his movements. Indian journalists vied with each other for the position of Ahmedabad correspondent to the leading Anglo-Indian and Indian journals. The *ashram* was no longer off the political map. There was, for instance, a genuine Hindu agitation when Mr Gandhi complained that the monkeys were creating havoc among the crops and vegetables of the *ashram*: was the taking of a monkey's life justifiable? Smallpox raged through Bombay City. Yet Englishmen's bearers refused to be vaccinated, for the Mahatma himself was condemning vaccination. Mr Gandhi examined the accounts of the *ashram*, and all India was to know that Mrs Gandhi failed to account for the sum of four annas. Then Mr Reginald Reynolds joined the *ashram*, and the details of his life were the common property of the *bazars*. He is by descent a Quaker, and his ardent pacifism drew him first to an acquaintance with the apostle of *Satyagraha* and later to a full participation in the life of the *ashram*. The list of visitors began to swell, and these

visitors were not confined to British India. The Mahatma was corresponding with Princes. More than once there was seen the venerable figure of Sir Prabhashanker Pattani, Regent of Bhavnagar until his ruler came of age. He represented the political wisdom of Kathiawar. He could remember the days when Kaba Gandhi was Prime Minister of Porbandar, and Kaba's son had found him a diligent worker at the *charka*. There were frequent visits from Mrs Sarojini Naidu, the great hostess of the Congress party, who never knew whether her chief claim to fame was her election to the Presidentship of the Indian National Congress or the inclusion of one of her poems in the *Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*.

And yet it was difficult to believe that the *ashram*, for all the publicity it received, could dominate the tortuous events of India on the eve of her "first year of independence." The Congress session in Calcutta was immediately followed by an All-India Mohammedan Conference convened by the Aga Khan. Delhi has rarely witnessed a more impressive Conference. Its delegates came from all parts of the country. The majority, perhaps, were little acquainted with Hindu India; for Mohammedan India, like Protestant Ireland, has something approaching geographical frontiers. But those who knew, and those who did not know, Hindu India embraced the goal of a united India. It was impossible, after the Delhi Conference, to suppose that Mohammedan India would unite with the authorities in resisting the onrush of political reform. None the less, separate electorates were sacrosanct: the Nehru Report had not produced an acceptable solution of the communal problem. Dr Ansari and other Nationalist leaders might still advocate joint electorates, and so encourage Mr Gandhi. The Delhi Conference showed beyond the shadow of a doubt that Dr Ansari was not the spokesman of

Mohammedan India. His followers were the Mohammedan students in the University, the young men who followed Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, talked of Communism, attended Rationalist meetings and assumed a godlessness that would imperil any Mahatma's peace of mind.

Scarcely had the Delhi Conference ended than Mohammedans found themselves agitated by the revolution in Afghanistan. King Amanullah, on his return from a spectacular tour of Europe, introduced one hasty and inadequate reform after another. So far the only monarch to have visited Russia since the execution of the Czar, King Amanullah was impressed by the "thoroughness" of Soviet reform. He resolved to spread culture among the tribesmen of his sparsely cultivated and mountainous country. If Moscow has a national theatre, Kabul must have one too. He therefore invited a theatrical company that was touring India to visit his capital, and he ordered members of the Court to attend the theatre in evening dress. Afghan society is not used to evening dress, and it was soon unutterably bored by the play. At the end of the first act, the gentlemen in the front row of the stalls began to remove their trousers, folded them neatly over the chairs, and then for the remainder of the performance sat upon their haunches in the approved Afghan fashion. The *fez* seemed to King Amanullah to be the symbol of reaction. He therefore ordered it to be discarded. As far as possible, European headgear was to be worn instead. Bombay and Calcutta hatters dispatched all the silk hats and bowler hats they could procure. There was a ready market for the war-time helmets, of the Russian and German helmets, and a water-carrier, unable to afford the luxury of a bowler, cut a watermelon in half, scraped out the interior, and wore the crust upon his loyal head. It was not long before King Amanullah's subjects discovered—as Mr

Gandhi himself had discovered long ago—that silk hats and evening-dress trousers are not a hall-mark of civilization. The capture of Kabul by a robber chief—Bachcha Saqao—the brutal execution of Ali Ahmed Jan, the desperate effort of King Amanullah to regain the throne and the final triumph of the late King, who as General Nadir Khan had led the Afghan troops against British India, were all events of primary importance to Mohammedan India.

And while revolution destroyed centralized government in Afghanistan, and temporarily reduced the country to an unchecked and ancient tribal rule, Mohammedans and Hindus were engaged in mortal combat in the streets of Bombay. Believing the *bazar* rumour that Pathans were kidnapping Hindu boys and using them for immoral purposes, Hindus attacked whatever Pathans they could find. Mohammedans came to the rescue of their co-religionists, and for days on end lawlessness reigned in Bombay. Nor was Imperial Delhi free from terror; for, while members of the Legislative Assembly were engaged in a profitless dispute with the Government upon the need for a Public Safety Act, and while Mr Patel, their President, was giving a new and aggravating exhibition of assumed impartiality, some extremists threw bombs into the middle of the arena. Members scattered in all directions, and a few were hurt. A gunpowder plot may have brought the Legislative Assembly still more into line with the Mother of Parliaments; but it was an event which Mr Gandhi could not ignore. Plainly, the country was not ready for *Satyagraha*.

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The scene shifts to London. Lord Irwin had made up his mind. Any fear that the Simon Commission would advocate a retrograde policy must be removed at once. Nothing less than Dominion Status as the explicit goal of

political endeavour in India would satisfy the various Indian parties. Nothing less than this could excuse or justify the continuance of British rule in India. Furthermore, it was clear that the Congress under Mr Gandhi, the Mohammedans under the Aga Khan, the Moderates under Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and those conscientious Princes who never failed to offer the Viceroy sound advice, wanted a Round Table Conference. Lord Irwin would, therefore, go to London and impress upon members of the Cabinet the necessity, first, of summoning a Conference, and secondly, of affirming in no uncertain terms that India is one day to take her place as a full member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It so happened that a general election had just brought the Labour Party once more to power. Mr Ramsay MacDonald, it is true, was again the head of a minority Government, and there were, therefore, definite limits to the advance he could make in an Indian policy of the British Government. None the less, the Government seemed to be safe for at least two years, and in the interval a bold Indian policy of some sort or other would have to be enunciated. In no sense could India be put on the shelf, as it had been during the brief months when Lord Olivier was the Secretary of State.

The new Secretary of State was Mr Wedgwood Benn, once a loyal Asquithian Liberal and a very recent recruit to the Labour Party. Not since Edwin Montagu quitted the India Office had there been a Secretary of State so resolutely determined to press on with fresh reforms. Lord Irwin soon found that Mr Wedgwood Benn and Mr Ramsay MacDonald were of one mind about India. They knew how far the Government as a minority Government could go, and they were eager to accede to Lord Irwin's request for a Round Table Conference and a new declaration of British policy. The key to the situation, they claimed,

was held by Mr Baldwin, who as the Leader of the Conservative Party could prevent the check of Parliamentary opposition. Lord Irwin and Mr Baldwin knew each other intimately. When Mr Baldwin appointed the Minister for Agriculture to be the Viceroy of India, he sacrificed his most trusted colleague. Week after week the Viceroy had furnished the Prime Minister with a full statement of Indian affairs, and now that his old chief was in Opposition he was not going to withdraw his confidence. Viceroy, Prime Minister, Secretary of State and Leader of the Opposition thought alike, though naturally the Leader of the Opposition could not act effectively without party backing; he would encounter difficulties in Parliamentary debate. But the new policy was outlined and approved, and Lord Irwin returned to India confident that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State would give him the fullest encouragement, and that his old chief would not let him down.

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Lord Irwin reached Bombay in the middle of October. Fully expectant of some important pronouncement, several of the Indian leaders had already assembled in Delhi—among them Mr Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Pandit Malaviya and Dr Moonje. On the last day of the month, Lord Irwin issued his statement. Without a doubt the leaders were impressed. They were even enthusiastic—in particular, Mr Gandhi. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru alone stood back. He was to be the President of the Indian National Congress when it met in full session at Lahore. This is "the year of youth's awakening," Mr Gandhi had said on his sixtieth birthday only a few weeks beforehand. Would the new President call to the youth of India in vain? Nearly two years ago the

Congress had voted for *purna swaraj*, and now old men were growing sentimental over the promise of eventual Dominion Status. It was intolerable. Yet Mr Gandhi tried to reason with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He emphasized that the offer was sincere, and sometimes with Mr Gandhi sincerity is the only thing that counts. The arguments continued until the following evening, and then the leaders in Delhi drew up an agreed statement which, signed by everyone present, showed that, while the leaders accepted Lord Irwin's invitation to the Round Table Conference, they recommended that the Conference should put forward a scheme for immediate Dominion Status. They also asked that the majority of the Indian delegates should be drawn from the Congress party and that all political prisoners should be immediately released. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar had gone very far to satisfy the misgivings of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. When their manifesto appeared in the English Press, a cry was raised that Lord Irwin had sacrificed himself to the Indian Moderates, and that the Moderates in their turn had sacrificed themselves to the Congressmen. In actual fact, the Moderates were about to grasp a great victory. They knew only too well that the Congress, for all its faults, is the one party in India which understands publicity and propaganda, and which alone has attempted to derive its strength from the will of the people. With the Congress behind them, the Moderates could make their proposals at the Round Table Conference effective. The significant fact was the acceptance of Lord Irwin's invitation, not the recommendations which haggling politicians wished to attach to it. Englishmen in India saw at once the importance of Lord Irwin's invitation, and, without any delay, the Council of the European Association cabled its approval to Mr Wedgwood Benn.

India waited to hear what British opinion would say. The Parliamentary debates were undeniably chilling. Lord Birkenhead left his numerous City offices to lead the Conservative opposition in the House of Lords. He picked up the threads of Indian policy where he had left them a year ago—when it was regarded in Whitehall almost as an impertinence to forestall the recommendations of the Simon Report—and he called upon the Simon Commission "to treat that which the Government have instructed or authorized the Viceroy to do as irrelevance." Lord Reading said that the reference to Dominion Status would encourage the Indian politicians to make still further demands, while Lord Parmoor and Lord Passfield, thinking more of a Government majority than of the need for a good impression in India, were almost apologetic in their defence of the Viceregal statement. The debate in the House of Commons was to cast a still deeper gloom. There was for Lord Irwin the sorrowful discovery that he had not, after all, carried his old chief with him. Mr Baldwin admitted that he personally approved the statement concerning Dominion Status; but later on he learned that members of the Simon Commission had not approved the statement, and for that reason alone he could no longer justify the publication of the note. To such prevarications are men driven when they fear repudiation by their followers. Mr Lloyd George spoke in the manner of Lord Reading. The man who expelled Edwin Montagu from his Cabinet was still impenitent.

In a chastened mood, Mr Gandhi reconsidered Lord Irwin's invitation. If there had been sincerity in the Viceroy, there was none in the British Parliament. It was not until the Parliamentary debates over the tragedy of Jalianwallabagh, and the punishment meted out to General Dyer, that he had called upon his countrymen rather "to

die in the way of God than to live in the way of Satan." Could it honestly be said that the Parliament, which debated the Viceroy's invitation in a most ungenerous spirit, reflected the least " change of heart "? The Viceroy had proved himself a sincere man; but once again it might be necessary to shift from a quarrel with the Government of India to a quarrel with the people of Great Britain.

Other doubts were assailing the mind of Pandit Motilal Nehru. He was a proud man and, as his exclusion from a not very important club had shown, he was unduly sensitive. Friends have confessed that he was not a little jealous of the success attained by his kinsman, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Certainly Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was winning a greater amount of Viceregal attention than Pandit Motilal Nehru. But Pandit Motilal had a deeper motive than jealousy. He loved his son, and he rejoiced in the prominence which he was winning in the politics of his country. It was Jawaharlal's mission to lead the younger generation, for whom the Independence resolution of the Madras Congress was a solemn pledge. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wanted a Peasants Republic. He believed in Communism and several other doctrines which to his father were anathema. Pandit Motilal might curb the young man's enthusiasm and, so doing, curb the enthusiasm of those who followed him. He would go with his son as far as it was possible for him to go, even if this meant breaking faith with his friends and colleagues; and he saw clearly enough that Jawaharlal would never participate in a Conference which it was not possible for him to dominate. And, quite legitimately, both Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mr Gandhi feared two things: the first, that the Labour Party was not strong enough to fulfil its own policy, unless the Opposition was driven to surrender by the success of a Civil Disobedience movement; the second, that a revolution

was imminent and that only a renewal of *Satyagraha* could prevent violence and bloodshed.

Yet for a long time neither Pandit Motilal Nehru nor Mr Gandhi made up his mind. The leaders met again in Allahabad, and again they stood by the Delhi manifesto. But Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru insisted that the Parliamentary debate had shattered all hopes, and it was soon obvious that Mr Gandhi toyed with the idea of insisting that the recommendations of the manifesto conditioned his acceptance of the Viceroy's invitation. Lord Irwin was on tour, and there seems to have been no one capable of telling him what doubts were assailing the minds of the Pandit and the Mahatma. In the end it was arranged that Mr Gandhi should meet the Viceroy on 23rd December, and Lord Irwin hurried back to his capital. Other leaders satisfied themselves that the two men were ready to go to London. Pandit Motilal Nehru speculated on the success of the Conference in which, without a doubt, he would have excelled. Mr Gandhi was telling everybody about the goodness of the Viceroy. On the morning of the 23rd, Lord Irwin arrived in Delhi. A few hundred yards from the station a very clever attempt was made to blow up the Viceregal train. Violence was certainly stalking through the land.

Within a few hours of the wrecking of the Viceroy's train, the leaders assembled in Viceregal Lodge. Mrs Sarojini Naidu, happy at the thought that she might play a part in a London Conference, was in an infectiously gay mood. Mr Patel, the President of the Legislative Assembly, was present. Though he had not the confidence of Mr Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru, he, too, expected a settlement; and it is a generally accepted belief that, when Lord Irwin entered the room, he had in his pocket a list of the political prisoners whom he proposed to release.

Some noticed, however, that Pandit Motilal Nehru wore a worried look and appeared to avoid his old friends. Mr Gandhi began by congratulating Lord Irwin on his escape from death. He then went on to ask the Viceroy to give a pledge that the Round Table Conference would recommend full Dominion Status, and that the British Government would implement this recommendation. A deep silence fell upon those present. The blow was thrust not only at the Viceroy, but at all others present. Mr Patel and Mrs Sarojini Naidu could not understand why they had not been warned beforehand. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru believed himself to be betrayed. Mr Jinnah scented something like an anti-Mohammedan conspiracy. Mr Gandhi was asking for more than the Viceroy could possibly give, and when Lord Irwin bade farewell to his visitors, he knew that the Round Table Conference would meet without the representatives of the Congress party.

It seemed that Mr Gandhi had shattered the key-stone of the Viceroy's policy. But he had done more than that. He alienated his party, great though it was, from the rest of India. A final break with the Mohammedan leaders—all except Dr Ansari and his group—was certain. And in the Congress itself angry voices were heard. Mr Gandhi went to the full session of the Congress at Lahore, over which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru triumphantly presided. Mrs Naidu and Pandit Malaviya followed him. They were convinced that their leader had made a profound mistake. But Mr Gandhi was not to be persuaded. The first year of India's Independence had begun, and Mr Gandhi ceremoniously hoisted the national flag. The foreign correspondents who had flocked to Lahore were anxious to know when civil disobedience would begin. Mr Gandhi could not tell them. India is not yet ripe for civil disobedience, he said.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Viceroy and Mahatma

Mr Gandhi hesitated. Yet civil disobedience was soon to come. "Civil disobedience alone," wrote Mr Gandhi, "can save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime, since there is a party of violence in the country, which will not listen to speeches, resolutions or conferences, but believes only in direct action." By the middle of February, Mr Gandhi had decided upon the form which civil disobedience should take. His countrymen were to defy the salt laws.

In leading an agitation against the salt laws, Mr Gandhi was on very strong ground. Debates in the Legislative Assembly, while Mr Gandhi was in Yeravda Gaol, showed how unpopular a tax on salt had become. The food of the peasant is usually so plain and unpalatable that it has to be seasoned with salt. Salt, therefore, is not a luxury, but a necessity; and in taxing salt the Government was taxing the food of the poorest of the poor. It was trivial to argue, as a few officials were known to argue, that a tax on salt existed long before the establishment of the British *raj*; for so also did *suttee*, the burning of widows, which Bentinck abolished with the enthusiastic approval of reformers like Ram Mohan Roy.

Those who wished to be scornful could have recalled Mr Gandhi's personal history. While he was in South Africa he gave up the use of salt to encourage a sick wife, and then attempted to impose the same discipline upon other *satyagrahis* in Tolstoy Farm. True the food of the peasant is unpalatable without salt, but Mr Gandhi was perpetually reminding the inmates of the *ashram* that it

was their duty to control their palates. It happens to be one of the easiest things in the world to break the salt laws of India. In many parts of the Gujerat coast the masses of salt lie ready to hand. And where these salt deposits are not to be found, the law-breaker has only to dip a bucket into the sea, boil the sea-water, and call the sediment, at the bottom of the bucket, salt.

This precisely was what Mr Gandhi proposed to do. On 12th March he would leave the *ashram* and walk, by definite stages each day, to Dandi, on the coast. There he would manufacture salt, and thus ceremonially defy the law. Other acts of civil disobedience would follow the breaking of the salt laws, though it was not for the moment clear what these particular acts were to be. Non-co-operation, however, could begin at once, and, accordingly, Pandit Motilal Nehru called upon his fellow-Congressmen to walk out of the Legislative Assembly: this "Rump," he said, no longer concerned him. The President himself resigned. A complete boycott of British goods was planned. Meanwhile, in the columns of *Young India*, Mr Gandhi was vigorously preaching the gospel of *Satyagraha*. His was a war without hate. The bearer of his ultimatum to the Viceroy would be none other than Mr Reginald Reynolds. India was to know that Mr Gandhi could number Englishmen among his allies. Accordingly, Mr Reynolds, clad in *khaddar*, walked past the mounted *sowars* that guard the entrance to the Viceroy's official residence. His only concession to the European manner was that he wore a *topee* instead of a Gandhi cap. The message that he bore began: "Dear Friend." He walked away, however, not with a reply, but with a formal acknowledgment, handed to him by the Viceroy's private secretary. The reply came later, when Lord Irwin tersely expressed his regret "to hear that Mr Gandhi intended to contravene the law."

As 12th March approached, there were speculations on Mr Gandhi's arrest. Rumour ran through the *ashram* that it would take place on a particular night. When that night arrived, the inmates of the *ashram* were very restive. They lay awake waiting for the sound of the police car. Only one of them enjoyed a sound sleep, and that was Mr Gandhi; for those who obey the Inner Light have no need to worry. Life at the *ashram* endeavoured to go on as before. There were prayers in the cool of the evening, and across the river still floated the tune of *Lead, kindly Light*.

March the 12th arrived. The *ashram* was astir long before dawn. So also was the city of Ahmedabad. Thousands of people crossed the bridge or waded through the river, and the crowd which lined the road numbered at least one hundred thousand.

The Mahatma and his chosen band of *satyagrahis* walked at an amazing speed. Almost the entire *ashram* endeavoured to walk the first half-mile with them. Mr Reynolds was holding little children by the hand. At the rear of the procession came a well-groomed pony, which a lady had presented to the Mahatma for use whenever he was tired. "Gandhi as Godiva," cabled a journalist to some popular London newspaper. The pony was eventually returned to the donor. The Anglo-Indian Press poked uproarious fun at the march, and then, as soon as Mr Gandhi had left the neighbourhood of Ahmedabad, it assumed ignorance of what was going on. The following band of journalists grew smaller and eventually disappeared. Mrs Sarojini Naidu, drinking tea in the Taj Mahal Hotel with English and Indian friends, discussed the situation with some uncertainty. But wherever Mr Gandhi went he found little groups of kindly peasants. They were far more eager to receive him now than when he toured Kaira as a recruiting officer during the Great War. Yet those who drove down

the dusty road which was leading Mr Gandhi to the sea noticed that the scene was quite unchanged. Peasants were working quietly in their fields, and travellers trudging along the road *salaamed* the *sahibs*, as though the soul of India remained as subservient as it was before.

When Mr Gandhi was within sight of the sea, Mrs Naidu left her Bombay hotel and hurried by train and car to Dandi. She wished to see her political *guru* defy the law, and when he waded into the sea she stood at the water's edge in her flowing *sari*. "Hail, deliverer!" she cried, as Mr Gandhi returned with a bucket of sea-water ready for the cauldron. Elsewhere in India people were breaking the salt laws. Fashionable ladies in Bombay walked in procession to the sands at Chaupati and noticed gleefully that a battery of cameras was focussed upon their buckets and their *saris*. The Revolution had begun.

Still the Government hesitated to arrest Mr Gandhi, who soon grew tired of the monotonous, if salubrious, surroundings of Dandi. A *satyagrahi* overcomes his adversary with love; the Government of India was crippling its rebel with inexhaustible patience and kindness. In the end, car and train brought Mr Gandhi to Bombay. And there the boycott of British goods was yielding strange results. The mill industry was at a standstill. Cotton brokers were almost without occupation. A heavy reduction in the English staff of various firms was about to begin. British industry, which seemed to be firmly rooted in Bombay, realized that it was being undermined by the only effective instrument public opinion can adopt; for, no matter how many arrests are made, people cannot be forced to buy goods against their will. Women were supporting the Civil Disobedience movement with unparalleled eagerness. Daughters of the oldest merchant-houses in Bombay stood outside the liquor-shops and the large European shops in

the main streets dissuading many from entering; and before long they had opened their own *khaddar* and *swadeshi* shops, where the articles displayed were often so attractive and beautiful that it was difficult for even the most loyal Englishwoman to pass them by.

Satyagraha is a hard discipline. Abdul Gaffar Khan believed that it could be imposed upon the Pathans and frontier tribesmen who inhabit the neighbourhood of Peshawar. He was soon called the "Frontier Gandhi." Many instances are recorded of herculean Pathans refusing to return the blows of the police and the military; but even if Gujerat was ripe for Civil Disobedience, Peshawar certainly was not, and never has been. There were ugly scenes. Rioting also broke out in Chittagong, and it became almost unfair to punish the rioters of Peshawar and Chittagong—or indeed any of the Congress leaders—without arresting the pioneer of the Revolution. The arrest accordingly took place, on 5th May. The Government did not want another spectacular trial, and to avoid this it exercised its rights under a Bombay Ordinance, introduced in 1827, which enabled it to imprison Mr Gandhi "as a menace to public order" without trial. He returned to Yeravda Gaol, not as a convict, but as a *détenu*.

Mr Abbas Tyebji took Mr Gandhi's place as temporary President of the Indian National Congress. In a few days, however, he also was arrested, and Mrs Naidu became the next President. Her first task was to lead a procession of *satyagrahis* who were to make salt from sea-water. The route was blocked by a group of policemen. Whereupon, the *satyagrahis* sat by the roadside, and Mrs Naidu began to write letters. On the other side sat the police. The enemies were determined to wear each other out. In the end, however, they dispersed by mutual agreement. It was soon Mrs Naidu's turn to be arrested, but there was an

Acting President to succeed her; and, indeed, no matter how many arrests were made, the Congress was never without an Acting President and an Acting Working Committee. Prisoners increased and multiplied. At one time, no less than sixty thousand men and women were behind prison walls. Here and there rioting took place. Martial law was proclaimed in Sholapur. In Bengal a terrorist movement, for which Mr Gandhi has never been responsible, still claimed its victims. Yet in all essentials it was a non-violent revolution. Nothing impressed Englishmen more than this refusal to offer physical resistance. Englishmen would drink their tea on the lawn of the Bombay Gymkhana and watch a great gathering of Congressmen on the *maidan*, of which the Gymkhana lawn forms part. Then mounted *sowars* arrived and cleared the *maidan*. Congressmen ran in all directions. But the English were always perfectly safe. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the hardest among them sickened at the sight of policemen beating pacifists with their *lathis*.

Even at this late hour, Lord Irwin did not altogether despair of winning Mr Gandhi to acquiescence, if not participation, in the Round Table Conference. He not only permitted leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jayaker to visit Yeravda Gaol, but he brought to Yeravda all the members of the original Working Committee of the Congress who had been imprisoned. Some of the London newspapers were indignant, but there was little that Lord Irwin would not risk for the sake of a fully representative Round Table Conference. In July the Simon Commission—nearly three years after its appointment—published its Report. It was unanimous, and the British like all-party agreements. It was progressive; it sanctioned, for instance, provincial autonomy, which implied popular control of law and order, and it recommended the sever-

ance of Burma from India: it destroyed once and for all the fear that the British Government would ever sanction a return to the Morley-Minto reforms. But there was not a man in India who believed that the Simon Report would gain acceptance from any party. The Simon Report, in fact, fell dead from the Press.

There were occasional signs of weariness with the struggle. Pandit Motilal Nehru came down to Bombay, and apparently expressed dismay at the turn of events. He admitted that he wanted to call off Civil Disobedience. A police officer, hearing this, hurried to the Secretariat. But not even the serious economic and industrial plight of Bombay could prevent the Governor and the leading officers of the Government from migrating to Mahableshwar, more than four thousand feet above sea-level, during the hot weather. The police officer's vitally important information passed through various stages to the " proper authorities " at Mahableshwar. In the interval, Pandit Motilal Nehru left the Bombay Presidency, and was almost immediately arrested.

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The efforts of the Moderates were fruitless. But Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru never lost an opportunity of assuring Lord Irwin that he and his colleagues would do all in their power to make the Conference a success. There were jubilant scenes when Maulana Mohammed Ali—now an invalid and near to death—and Maulana Shaukat Ali sailed from Bombay. Thousands of Mohammedans cheered them. While Dr Ansari and Mr Abbas Tyebji kept aloft the banner of Nationalist Mohammedanism, the great mass of political Mohammedans applauded all that the Ali brothers were doing. Communalism maimed the Civil Disobedience movement from the start. With the Ali brothers sailed many of the Princes and other delegates to the Round Table Conference. The Nationalist Press,

angered by the impressive representation that the Conference was to have, resolved to ignore the Conference, as the Anglo-Indian Press, to its cost, had resolved to withhold descriptions of Mr Gandhi's march to Dandi. But the progress of the Round Table Conference was too important to be ignored. India's political centre had shifted once again to London.

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The London crowd stood for hours outside the Houses of Parliament waiting for a glimpse of the King, who opened the Conference, and the Princes of India. To its great disappointment, several of the Princes discarded their magnificent robes, and wore instead their frock-coats and silk hats. Here was no riot of colour for the popular newspapers to describe in their leading columns; but then a number of popular newspapers had decided not to "feature" the opening of the Round Table Conference at all. A new and pernicious doctrine, that a sympathetic knowledge of India is incompatible with patriotism, was coming speedily into fashion.

Fortunately, the final session of the Round Table Conference received ample attention from responsible newspapers. There were no sporting events and no international crises to diminish its lustre. Mr Ramsay MacDonald himself was at the beck and call of almost all the delegates. He had obviously decided that a successful Indian policy should be the distinguishing mark of what was likely to be a brief ministerial career. It was not, however, until the New Year that the proceedings of the Conference marked a definite stage in India's history. Inevitably, the real work was still being done behind the scenes. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had completed long ago his scheme for an All-India Federation. More than that, he had won the consent of progressive princes like the Maharajah of

Bikaner and the Nawab of Bhopal. The Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes himself, the Maharajah of Patiala, was raising no objections. Then the spokesmen of the leading States gave their approval. Sir Akbar Hydari, representing none other than the Nizam of Hyderabad, declared for Federation. So also did Sir Mirza Ismael, the Dewan of Mysore. Colonel K. N. Haksar, a cousin of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Nehrus, who had a watching brief for Kashmir and Gwalior, was sympathetic. On 5th January, therefore, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru solemnly propounded the scheme for All-India Federation. In return for responsible government at the Centre, he said, the Indian leaders were prepared to accept all the reasonable limitations that the British Government might wish to impose. It was a great speech. Henceforward the cry of Federation was to replace the cry of Dominion Status. A comprehensive scheme was to be applicable to all the territorial distinctions and minority problems of India. Moreover, responsibility at the Centre implied a princely partnership in the control of India. Conservative and progressive forces were to work in unison. The authors of the Simon Report knew that Federation was desirable; but they never supposed that the Princes would agree to the limitations upon their sovereignty which Federation implies. Lord Irwin, fully acquainted with the Nehru Report, had no doubt that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru would like to press for Federation. But that he had allies—and many of them—among the Princes was hitherto beyond his knowledge, and beyond his hopes. Yet the Maharajah of Bikaner's eloquent support of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was applauded by his brother Princes. Princely co-operation changed the entire tone of opposition, both among Conservatives in England and among Congressmen in India. Lord Reading, the ex-Viceroy, who had been so critical of Lord Irwin's invitation

to the Round Table Conference and the accompanying declaration that the goal of British policy in India was Dominion Status, rose at last to support Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Liberal support for Mr Ramsay MacDonald was assured.

Civil Disobedience still raged in India. Yet common sympathies were drawing people of the various communities together. There was something very like national mourning when Maulana Mohammed Ali, unable to stand the strain of the Conference any longer, took to his bed and died. Congress newspapers found that they were instinctively paying glowing tribute to a man who had persuaded his community to support the Conference. The prisons were still full. But tales of genuine suffering were heard everywhere, and the *Times of India* was advocating improved conditions for political prisoners. The English community was very seriously hit. Scarcely a mill was working full time, though the mills of Ahmedabad were flourishing. In Ahmedabad successful mill-owners were contributing generously to the Congress funds. A new Congress Hall was built, and Englishmen noted that the fans, or *punkahs*, which had been installed were of British manufacture. The Indian mill-owners of Ahmedabad were flourishing at the expense of the Indian mill-owners of Bombay. It was impossible to ruin Englishmen—and many of them were ruined—without bringing disaster to their Indian associates. It was certainly never Mr Gandhi's desire to see the "dark satanic mills" of Ahmedabad increase in number. Civil Disobedience, alas, was not so pure a movement as he wished it to be. Congress activities at their worst are mean and contemptible. But at their best—who does not honour the man or woman who passively receives injuries and suffers imprisonment in the belief that thus freedom is won for the country?

The English were sick of warfare, and perhaps, in the final analysis, Mr Gandhi was right: suffering had made his countrymen worthy of freedom. Nor was the lesson of suffering lost upon Englishmen in London. Almost every Hindu delegate who spoke had some relative or close friend in prison. They had risked their reputations and many other things by visiting London in the middle of a Civil Disobedience movement. It was intolerable that they should return to India empty-handed. None the less, they required Mr Ramsay MacDonald's vigorous speech at the closing meeting in order to assure themselves that the battle for Federation had been won.

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As the boat took them back to Bombay, the delegates met to prepare a manifesto to the nation. It was difficult to reach complete unanimity. Day after day their meeting was adjourned. At one time the delegates despaired of their ability to produce a unanimous manifesto, though the call of patriotism triumphed in the end and, as soon as they reached Bombay, they were able to issue a sound and sober statement on the situation. Lord Irwin, quickly seizing the opportunities which this situation offered, ordered the unconditional release of Mr Gandhi and members of the original Working Committee of the Congress, so that they might reconsider their Civil Disobedience movement in the light of what had happened at the Round Table Conference. " Is it not now possible," he asked the Legislature, " for those responsible for this policy to try another course that in the light, on the one hand, of the sinister events in India, and, on the other, of the encouragement offered to India by the progress of the Conference in England, would seem to be a more excellent way? " Mr Gandhi and Mrs Naidu left Yeravda Gaol together and made for Bombay. Within a few hours Mrs

Naidu had installed herself once again in her rooms in the Taj Mahal Hotel, and Mr Gandhi was addressing a packed meeting on the *maidan*. Very soon, however, both Mr Gandhi and Mrs Naidu left for Allahabad, where they might meet other members of the Working Committee and hear from Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru himself a report on the activities of the Round Table Conference.

Pandit Motilal Nehru was also in Allahabad, but his days were numbered. The strain of prison-life undermined his health, and although the Government had released him, on grounds of ill-health, some weeks beforehand, strength steadily diminished. Once this lover of "all beauteous things" asked for a looking-glass, so that he might see whether illness had impaired his features. He could not bear the vision the mirror held up to him. He was ready to die. At his bedside stood, not the menials with which he once surrounded himself, but the emaciated figure of India's Mahatma. One of the strangest partnerships the world has known was about to end.

Though Mr Gandhi and his chosen colleagues were now released from prison, it was still necessary to decide whether or not the Congress should accept Lord Irwin's offer of peace and in what manner the Congress should call off Civil Disobedience. How long the Congress could have maintained Civil Disobedience was a matter of keen dispute. Many supporters of the Government argued that funds were low and that, given another two months, the police could have crushed the movement altogether. In the Congress there were enthusiasts who believed that in a few months' time the Government of India would have surrendered completely, with the result that the British Government would confer, not with the leaders of the various parties outside the Congress, but with the leaders of the Congress alone. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr

Vallabhbhai Patel were by no means to accept a truce without stiffening their demands. They would have liked Mr Gandhi to be as truculent as he was in the December of 1929.

Mr Gandhi, however, was in a mood for peace. Behind prison bars he had witnessed both the triumph and the degeneration of *Satyagraha*. Rich men were reaping the profits intended for the peasants. And what could the Congress put in the place of an All-India Federation with a Federal Government responsible not to the British Parliament, but to the will of Indian electors? Without Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr Gandhi would lose some of his zest for the struggle.

A difficult phase had begun. When Mr Gandhi was released from gaol in 1924 he found other men contending for the leadership of the Congress. He returned to leadership late in 1928, only because other men were fighting furiously among themselves, and it was necessary to summon a man who had lived in retirement and was, therefore, unshackled by recent petty disputes. During the struggle, Mr Gandhi was the one leader whom inflamed men and women were prepared to follow. Someone said of Kitchener that he was not a great man, but a great poster. Mr Gandhi was India's patriotic poster. He could win a non-violent war; but could he win the peace? Mrs Naidu's intuition told her that, in time, the extremists would unduly influence Mr Gandhi's mind, forcing him to demand concessions which the Government could not grant. She soon decided that discussions must take place not between representatives of the Government and representatives of the Congress, but between Lord Irwin and Mr Gandhi alone. The two men—the one representing the might of the British *raj*, and the other representing the popular will of the Congress—were to be closeted together

until they hammered out an agreement. Lord Irwin heard of the proposal, and since he was ready to stake everything for the sake of Congress participation in the Conference, he gave an eager consent. In due course Mr Gandhi asked for, and obtained, his first interview.

Outwardly, Mr Gandhi was now at the height of his power. His leadership was followed gladly by men and women who were not to know how precarious his position with the Working Committee might occasionally become. Here was his opportunity to introduce to India a new era of temperance and simplicity. He was to the last a social reformer, and as he walked past the mounted *sowars* outside the Viceroy's house in New Delhi, which Lord Irwin was now occupying for the first time, he must have decided that all this pomp was quite unnecessary; for when, a few weeks later, the Congress met in full session at Karachi, he proposed that henceforward the Viceroy should receive a salary not exceeding five hundred rupees a month. And from his own point of view he was right. The future representative of the King-Emperor would not suffer loss of dignity in a Gandhi *raj* even if he shared the common life of the *ashram*.

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Thus began those intimate conversations between the Viceroy and the Mahatma which sent old clubmen into paroxysms of rage and created for Lord Irwin a place among " the small group of the greater Viceroys." There are only two men who can leave for posterity a true account, or even an approximately true account, of these conversations. They are Lord Irwin and Mr Gandhi. Their talk ranged over all aspects of the situation. New Delhi was alive with rumours. It was said that when Lord Irwin received Mr Gandhi during one of his weekly days of silence, the Viceroy's study was soon littered with pieces

of paper on which Mr Gandhi had written his statements and interrogations. It was also said that a member of the Viceroy's staff paced up and down the corridor impatiently, and when at last he had the courage to enter the study, he found Lord Irwin carefully explaining to Mr Gandhi the Greek text of a certain passage in the Sermon on the Mount. Whether or not this was true, the journalistic imagination, then heavily at work, could not mar the strange, the almost heroic, character of these conversations. The task of these two men was fraught with many perils. Lord Irwin could not risk repudiation by the British Government, nor could Mr Gandhi risk repudiation by the Congress. There were limits to the concessions which each could make. They remained party leaders, though they spoke to each other as man to man. It was only to be expected that Mr Gandhi, having begun Civil Disobedience by breaking the salt laws, should ask for the abolition of the tax on salt. Lord Irwin had to explain that, since the Civil Disobedience shook the financial stability of India, it was more than ever impossible to abolish the salt tax. Lord Irwin could not countenance a deliberate boycott of British goods. At the same time, he recognized that a campaign of "Buy Indian" in India is as legitimate as a campaign of "Buy British" in England. He also recognized that if the Congress leaders called off Civil Disobedience, the Government must release all political prisoners not guilty of violent crime and withdraw all the Ordinances imposed during the Civil Disobedience movement. So far, agreement was not too difficult. But Lord Irwin never forgot the need for making the excellent results of the first session of the Round Table Conference permanent. He was determined that, when the Round Table Conference assembled for the second time, in the autumn, Congressmen should be among the delegates. If necessary, they should

form a delegation proportionate in size to their influence in India. Lord Irwin, therefore, sought to persuade Mr Gandhi that India needed a Federal Government limited by certain safeguards and reservations. In other words, whether Congressmen attended the second Conference or not, the work of the Conference was not to be undone. Such a position did not entirely please the Working Committee. It meant that, in spite of the success of the Civil Disobedience movement, the Moderates and others who attended the Conference had stolen their thunder. They asked for a stiffening of demands. Above all, they insisted upon an inquiry into police atrocities.

Yet, whatever the Working Committee might say, Lord Irwin's appeal was irresistible. The two men sat talking until midnight. No final agreement had been reached, and the Viceroy, who was tired, suggested a further meeting. " Good night, Mr Gandhi," he said, " and my prayers go with you." Had the Mahatma, when he sought for signs of " a change of heart " in the administration, ever dreamed that a Viceroy would speak to him in this earnest fashion? Lord Irwin, in treating with him at all, incurred the wrath of more than half his political friends in England. His stake had been co-operation with the Congress. If the Congress failed him, his reputation as a great Viceroy would be shattered. It was Mr Gandhi's duty—indeed, it was his privilege—not to let the Viceroy down. The paths of the two men converged at last. The *khaddar*-clad " half-naked *fakir* " and the tall Etonian beheld together a vision of the new India.

Still the Working Committee demanded an inquiry into the behaviour of the police. When the Provincial Governors last met in New Delhi, Lord Irwin had given them a solemn assurance that he would sanction no inquiry. He was not going back on his word. If Mr Gandhi was right

when he declared that, without an inquiry, there could be no Pact between them, the fabric which Lord Irwin had fashioned during five eventful years must be broken. Lord Irwin would bow to the storm and retire to Garrowby, a pitiable failure. What was Mr Gandhi to do?—defy the Working Committee or bring his friend, the greatest of all the Englishmen with whom he had ever co-operated, into ignominious contempt? He knew his own reputation for obstinacy. In the past, obstinacy combined with righteousness had been an effective political weapon. But he never loved obstinacy for its own sake. He refused to prosecute either the sentry outside President Kruger's house, who knocked him down, or the Pathan who wounded him as he was making his way to the registration office in Johannesburg. Assuming that the allegations of police atrocities were true, did they justify a prosecution of the police? In the end it was the strength of *Satyagraha*, not the weakness of a political situation, which compelled Mr Gandhi to give way; and, while reports of a final breakdown of negotiations were circulating through New Delhi, Mr Gandhi told Lord Irwin that he was ready to sign the Pact.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

After the Pact

For the last time Mr Gandhi walked down the steps of the Viceroy's house. The fateful news spread swiftly through the country. Families made eager preparations to welcome members who, in a few hours' time, would be released from prison. In the little cafés and on the lawns and verandahs of the clubs, there was a buzz of animated conversation. Tokens of the boycott disappeared abruptly; and a wealthy *khaddar*-attired Parsi—the contemporary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at Harrow—who had ostentatiously retired from every social club of which Englishmen were members, walked over the *maidan* in Bombay to renew old friendships with the *sahibs*.

Soon after the signing of the Irish Treaty, a Treasury official drew shrieks of laughter from Mr Lloyd George's grandchildren by pirouetting along the corridors of No. 10 Downing Street. Such hilarity in the official sanctuaries of Delhi was hardly to be expected. The Delhi Pact appeared to be the final blow at the great bureaucracy of the British *raj*. Older members of the Civil Service knew that the spirit of the times was against them, but they knew also that they could render a good account of their stewardship. They had tried to check the Liberal tendencies of their Viceroy, and they had failed. And yet even among them there was not unanimity. If the secretariat in Delhi and Simla seemed too remote to concern itself with National aspirations, there were men in the districts who knew how to judge its enormous strength. They were ready to acclimatize themselves to new conditions, and when they saw the spirit of the Viceroy, whom they scarcely

ever met, they recognized it as their own. At a dinner-party an elderly civil servant declared that if, thirty years ago, he and his friends had known that it was to be their duty to imprison men and women for the honourable offence of patriotism they would not have joined the Service. " That is the man," Mr Vallabhbhai Patel told an English friend, " to whom we shall give high office when we have won *swaraj*."

The police, like the older members of the Civil Service, had their doubts. They were prepared loyally to carry out the terms of this strange Pact. They were grateful to a Viceroy who was ready to wreck the negotiations rather than agree to an inquiry into allegations of police brutalities. Yet some were heard confessing to their friends that the Viceroy had made a most inopportune surrender. In two months' time, they insisted, Congress would have been down on its knees, discredited and bankrupt. Their views found an unconscious echo in the London Press. India's misfortune, declared one of the English newspapers, is that she has not one Mahatma, but two—a Mahatma in the Sabarmati *ashram* and another in the Viceroy's house. And, indeed, to many Englishmen, as to Mr Winston Churchill, there seemed to be something nauseating and degrading in the spectacle of a disbarred member of the Inner Temple, now a seditious *fakir*, walking half-naked up the steps of the Viceroy's palace to confer on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor. Such views, whether they won the sympathy or the amused contempt of Englishmen in India, served only to remind them that opinion in London could now do nothing to rescind what had been accomplished. Churchillian phrases, however picturesque, had become innocuous. Lord Carson's greatest speech was delivered in the House of Lords soon after the signing of the Irish Treaty—and Parliament had met only to give legislative sanction to a definite

commitment. If Lord Irwin had betrayed his countrymen, circumstances made that betrayal absolute and irrevocable. As Lord Irwin watched the " half-naked *fakir* " walk away from the Palace, which so ill corresponded with his own temperament and ambitions, he knew that men might judge him harshly. But it was not his fault that the issues which affect the destinies of India are now decided in India itself. He had pursued a policy already shaped by Lord Chelmsford and Lord Reading, and by the Viceroys before them. The venture to which he had committed the Empire might be new: it was none the less inevitable. The reward that he might receive for his leadership scarcely mattered. If need be, he would retire to Garrowby, as a kinsman had retired to Falloden. Not for nothing is Lord Irwin the great-grandson of Lord Grey of the Reform Bill.

For Mr Gandhi, the consequences of the Pact were incontrovertible. The Viceroy treated him as the spokesman of India. Public opinion enthroned him, and the throne involves rivalry. As the car drove him from the Viceroy's house to Dr Ansari's house, where his colleagues awaited him, he must have wondered what reception the Working Committee of Congress would accord him. He had wrenched one concession from the Viceroy after another. He stood stubbornly before Lord Irwin and demanded an inquiry into allegations against the police. Embittered members of Congress were determined that this inquiry should be held. But the Viceroy was even more stubborn—and Mr Gandhi had given way. That surrender would require careful explanation.

The Working Committee had permitted Mr Gandhi to negotiate with Lord Irwin alone. If during those negotiations Mr Gandhi betrayed the confidence of Congress, he alone would receive censure, and the Working Committee would be free to repudiate his actions. Pandit Jawaharlal

Nehru saw at once that the Delhi Pact was a most effective barrier to the realization of a peasants' republic. Mr Vallabhbhai Patel—the actual President of the Congress—seems to have been the first to detect the fact that it was Lord Irwin and not Mr Gandhi who won all the major advantages. Moreover, events were soon to show that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Vallabhbhai Patel did not stand in isolation. Prisoners recruited from the upper classes were often only too anxious to return to the comforts of their own houses. Yet even among them there were many who said that, since the only result of the Civil Disobedience movement was a Pact highly advantageous to the Viceroy, their sufferings had been endured in vain. There were thousands of volunteers whom Congress had paid for their agitations and who, as a result of their Pact, were now thrown into unemployment. Intellectual young men referred apologetically to the Mahatma as a poor old gentleman. They admitted that when Mr Gandhi died they would revive the struggle: and they would not use the methods of non-violence.

A split in Congress was likely, and Mr Gandhi saw at once that such a split meant a fight between those who believed in non-violence and those who cared nothing for his own ethics of revolt. Like Redmond in Ireland, Mr Gandhi had made the mistake of not taking into his confidence the leaders of the younger men. Was it not probable that, while he conferred day after day with Mr Gandhi, Lord Irwin himself suspected that he was negotiating, not with a leader of the immediate future, but with a man who was to pass swiftly out of power and popularity?

For the moment, however, the Working Committee was concerned with showing a brave face to the delegates who, in a few weeks' time, were to assemble in full Congress at Karachi. On the eve of that Congress, Nationalists were

driven to fury by the announcement that a young Congressman was to pay the extreme penalty for having murdered a police officer in Lahore. It was this man, Bhagat Singh, who, as the police subsequently discovered, threw the bombs into the Legislative Assembly. He was handsome and attractive. He gathered other young men round him, for in peace or war he was destined to be a leader of his fellows. In his own fashion, he was as much a patriot as the Congress volunteer who proudly left his home for prison—none the less, a patriot who believed in violence. Yet if any man deserved to die, it was Bhagat Singh. No Government that sanctioned capital punishment could have saved Bhagat Singh from the gallows: or, if it did, it would show the whole world that it was prepared to subordinate justice to political convenience. The best Congressmen knew this only too well. They knew also the implacable hatred which their country has for the police methods of India. The civilian looks upon the policeman—rightly or wrongly—as his natural enemy. He does not see the hard-working, conscientious and liberal-minded man who controls the police activities of his district. He is aware only of a machine which seems to spy into the most intimate details of his life and is ready to convert the generous words of youth into threats of treason and sedition. Hundreds of Congressmen were ill-disposed to congratulate Mr Gandhi upon his willingness to forego an inquiry into police behaviour, and thus protests against the execution of Bhagat Singh became an emotional compensation for the loss of a police inquiry.

And so black flags were waved at a Congress convened for the special purpose of deciding how far Mr Gandhi and his party should co-operate in the work of the Round Table Conference. Mr Gandhi's own contribution to the proceedings was meagre. He had no policy beyond the

one outlined by the Pact. He wanted Hindu-Moslem unity, and he wanted to dedicate himself afresh to the redemption of the Untouchables. It was left to other men to frame the resolution by which the Congress gave a hesitant promise to co-operate in the Round Table Conference.

"This Congress," ran the resolution, "having considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it, and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of *purna swaraj*, meaning complete independence, remains intact. In the event of a way remaining otherwise open to the Congress to be represented at any Conference with the representatives of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal; and, in particular, so as to give the nation control over the Army, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, and to have scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, and to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England and the right to either party to end the partnership at will: provided, however, that the Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India."

The framers of this resolution had, of course, infringed the Delhi Pact already. If it represented the mind of Mr Gandhi, his visit to London would be useless. The more conservative members of the Indian Civil Service turned sorrowing eyes to high authority in Delhi. Could the Viceroy ignore this resolution? Could the Secretary of State in his proximity to Parliamentary opinion ignore it? Yet they did: hoping, perhaps, that Mr Gandhi would also ignore it. But Mr Gandhi could not completely liberate himself from the fetters of his party. Events were puzzling. He needed advice and sympathy; perhaps even the advice and sympathy which the Viceroy had liberally bestowed. Once again Mr Gandhi and Lord Irwin met. The meeting was, however, in Bombay, for his new-found friend was on his way to England. The eventful Viceroyalty had come to an end.

Next day, Lord Irwin, accompanied by the Governor of Bombay's Bodyguard and by members of the Bombay Light Horse, submitted to his last piece of pageantry in India. Officials of Bombay and the Government of India assembled near the Gateway of India. It was midday, and the temperature exceeded ninety degrees in the shade. The officials, each drawn up in a carefully defined order of precedence, each wearing a grey frock-coat and a white *topee*, and each wondering how long his stiff collar would stand the strain, waited patiently to shake hands with the departing Viceroy. The last to shake hands was a representative of the Society of Yorkshiremen in Bombay. It was obvious that Lord Irwin could not have endured the strain very much longer. Then, as the motor-boat raced towards the liner that lay in midstream, the crowd moved silently away. It was a strange tribute to a Viceroy who had promulgated more Ordinances than any of his predecessors. Perhaps, as Lord Irwin glanced once more towards Bombay, he recalled the scene when another Yorkshire Viceroy, Lord Ripon, left India for good. Lord Ripon wished Indian magistrates to try Europeans as well as Indians. To the Europeans of those days the decision was an outrage, and as he was rowed out to the mail-boat, Lord Ripon noticed that the *sahibs* had covered the entire façade of their popular club with brooms and broom-sticks. Yet the critics frequently compare the one Viceroyalty with the other.

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Little more than twenty-four hours before this, the imposing figure of Lord Willingdon had stood beneath the Gateway of India. More than a decade had passed since Lord and Lady Willingdon lived at Government House on Malabar Hill. During that time many changes underlined the face of the city. There was a greater simplicity about

Anglo-Indian life, and though this was in part dictated by economy, it was due chiefly to the gradual but persistent undermining of the belief that elaborate ritual and pageantry impress the Indian, who, in the long run, pays for the spectacle himself. Yet here—beneath the Gateway—stood the Viceroy-elect and Lady Willingdon, as though the old domineering Anglo-India still remained. After five years amid the democratic surroundings of Ottawa and the Gallic courtesies of old Quebec, was it possible that Lord and Lady Willingdon had misunderstood the needs of a new India? Or were they loyally obeying an order from Whitehall—an order bidding them to restrict some of the simplicities of the Irwin *régime*? No one knew.

Mr Gandhi was still in Bombay. The Viceroy-elect did not see him. Again people were puzzled. Perhaps, Lord Willingdon was obedient to yet another order from Whitehall. Mr Gandhi was the leader of only one of the innumerable parties in India; why should he be treated with any special consideration? It did not matter that for the past few months Mr Gandhi had been actually the spokesman of India. Yet outside official circles there were men who thought it was worth a little compromise with the strictest codes of diplomatic etiquette if Mr Gandhi could be brought still more into sympathy with British policy. He followed Lord Irwin eagerly once he had come to know him. He is at his best with Englishmen. If ever he became the Prime Minister of a Federal India his nature would compel him to appoint a few Englishmen to his Cabinet. What he needs above all things is personal contact and personal sympathy. And the new Viceroy was not to meet him in Bombay.

The India Office, near whose door the massive statue of Clive stands sentinel, harbours some of the finest talent in the world. Ever since Pitt and his contemporaries, smarting

from the memory of the lost American colonies, discovered that India was now the brightest jewel that remained of the British Crown, experts in Whitehall have been exceedingly conscientious and courteous. There is no office so willing to impart information or to acquire information from its visitors. But for all its fine impartiality the India Office cannot escape the atmosphere of Whitehall. It is six thousand miles from Bombay and only a few hundred yards from the Palace of Westminster, where frequently politicians who know nothing about India, and care less, threaten to embarrass a Government over its Indian policy. The India Office, like the Irish Office before it, is doomed to extinction. The brilliance, the courtesy and the sympathy of its officers will not save it, because it represents a system that has become as archaic as was the *ancien régime* before the storming of the Bastille. If on the eve of Lord Willingdon's arrival in Bombay the India Office heeded voices in Westminster it must be granted that those voices were ominous. The head of a minority Government, who had not the courage to choose a Viceroy from his own party—where ability abounded—may have thought that the Conservatives deserved some reassurance. There was, indeed, something about the new Viceregal pomp that boded ill for the future.

Mr Gandhi returned to Sabarmati. Outwardly, life in the *ashram* went on as before. Miraben still busied herself in the service of this unusual community: men and women

came and went on the oddest errands: soothsayers arrived to predict trouble or triumph: occasionally, Englishmen from the cantonment at Ahmedabad would walk their horses through the Sabarmati river and call at the *ashram* on the chance of being able to converse with their neighbours.

Englishmen, in fact, were no longer afraid of expressing their sympathy. In the early days of Civil Disobedience, during Lord Reading's Viceroyalty, personal contact had been considered disloyal. When Mr Gandhi agreed to meet a few Englishmen in a private house, a Government official came in fear and trembling lest Lord Lloyd, who was then Governor of Bombay, should hear of his attendance and express annoyance. Lord Lloyd has not the patience of Lord Irwin. A journalist who reported a meeting between Lord Lloyd and Mr Gandhi might have many amusing and instructive things to say; but he could hardly describe such a meeting as a conference between two Mahatmas. Yet Lord Lloyd has actually more in common with Mr Gandhi than either of them will admit. Not long ago Lord Lloyd said that it was the duty of Conservatives to think less of the Indian politicians and more of the Indian peoples. There is almost a Gandhi ring about those words. Both assumed that it was their mission to improve the lot of the Indian peasant. Both agree that the prime necessity of India is good government. It is in their interpretation of goodness that they differ. If there is tragedy in the economics of *swadeshi* and the spinning-wheel, there is tragedy no less in the tenements which Lord Lloyd built for the mill-workers of Bombay and in the ambitious Bach Bay reclamation scheme. The tenements are empty: the reclamation scheme drained Bombay of its finances. There is vision behind Lord Lloyd's two gigantic failures. There is vision behind the spinning-wheel. Both Lord Lloyd and Mr Gandhi have paid dearly for their Himalayan blunders.

In 1931 there was no Englishman in Bombay of Lord Lloyd's stature to show either friendship or animosity to Mr Gandhi; but the desire to express sympathy had become far more urgent and widespread. There were older men who, while they disliked the destruction of the old Anglo-Indian exclusiveness, admitted that it was inevitable. Many of their contemporaries, however, were quick to welcome the change. Mr J. R. Abercrombie, the President of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, had declared, in the thick of the Civil Disobedience movement, that Englishmen were in complete sympathy with national aspirations: all they demand, he said, is the right to trade under fair conditions. Still greater eagerness was shown by the younger men. Shortly before Lord Irwin was due to leave India, more than a hundred young Englishmen—all of them under the age of thirty-five—subscribed their names to a farewell letter. " The burden which your patient statecraft places upon our shoulders," they declared, " is one no adventurous Englishman would wish to cast down. Whatever seeming loss there may be in privilege and prestige, there is no loss in the opportunities of personal service and individual influence. . . . Even if your policy had not been marked by the success that is now apparent to every impartial observer, we should yet feel compelled to acknowledge the inspiration of your example; for you have withstood the most unfair criticism that has been levelled at any Viceroy, and when you were charged with weakness, you ignored the charge with the quiet dignity of which strong men alone are capable." They were ready to serve the new India as faithfully as they had served the old. They founded a Dinner Club, to which Indians came and expounded their views; and when they invited Mr Gandhi, he made a special journey from Ahmedabad to Bombay, and his drive through the crowded streets near

the Taj Mahal Hotel was like a royal procession. Who could doubt that Englishmen in London were ready to show a similar sympathy and enthusiasm?

Yet Mr Gandhi's heart was sorely troubled. He had to go to London with something far more tangible than the expressed sympathy of young Englishmen in India. He might leave the problems of Federation and Finance to the Liberals and the Moderates. His own contribution was expected to be a pact between the Hindus and the Mohammedans and a policy for the redemption of the Untouchables. And, in his own heart, did he not know that he was not the man to heal the breach between the Hindus and the Mohammedans? Even as Lord Irwin was leaving the country, Mr Gandhi's belief that violence begets violence was to receive a striking vindication; for no sooner was the news of Bhagat Singh's execution broadcast through the *bazars* of Cawnpore than there started a grim communal riot, due to the prompt refusal of the Mohammedan shopkeepers to observe a *hartal*. The riot ended as a massacre. In parts of the city, Hindus outnumbered Mohammedans by ten to one. There were streets and alleys in which the Hindu rioters completely annihilated the Mohammedan population. For days no news came from Cawnpore, and the delegates left the Karachi Congress before they knew what had happened. It was the blackest day since Jalianwalabagh.

Swiftly on the heels of the Cawnpore riots there followed trouble in Kashmir. Kashmir is a Hindu State islanded in a Mohammedan world. Nearly all its inhabitants are Mohammedans, and there are naturally some bonds of sympathy between the Kashmiris and their neighbours, the Punjabis and the Afghans. But the dynasty, by no means an old one, is Hindu. Immediately below the ruler are the Kashmiri Brahmans, who form the aristocracy of

his State. There are probably not more than five thousand Kashmiri Brahmans in the whole of India. They are, however, very much to the fore. Among them are Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir K. N. Haksar and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru—one, the leading Indian Moderate; the second, an adviser to the Princes; the third, the spokesman of Congress youth. Their influence gives point to the complaint that the Kashmiri Brahmans, while they use the language of Gladstonian Liberalism, think only of strengthening the Brahman hold upon India. But is it their fault that they are the victims of a most impressive ancestry—an ancestry which makes Englishmen of assumed Norman descent *parvenus* by comparison—that they have inherited large property, or that they keep alive a tradition of public service? Aristocracies are apt to be disinterested. Lord Irwin's great-grandfather, for instance, knew perfectly well that he was inviting Englishmen of landed property to dismember their own oligarchy by supporting his Reform Bill.

Yet it was, perhaps, hardly fair that these Kashmiri Brahmans should advocate democratic principles in British India while the State to which they belonged was still governed in a medieval fashion. Mr Gandhi himself has been careful never to annoy the ruler of any State. He has drawn a close distinction between Indians who are the subjects of a Maharajah and Indians who are British subjects. But the day has long since vanished when Indian States' subjects can be isolated from the thought and the agitations of British India. If there is democracy in the Provinces there must be—sooner or later—democracy in the States. Trouble in Kashmir was but the prelude to revolutions—silent or violent—that must take place in princely India within the next half-century. No strengthening of treaties and *sanads*, no definitions of paramountcy,

can ward them off for ever. The Princes who support Federation know that they are preparing the way for change. In the future they may, perhaps, reign as constitutional monarchs: their day as autocratic rulers is about to end.

Outside Kashmir there are many Mohammedans who cherish the pan-Islamic dreams of a Mohammedan Empire stretching from Cairo to Lahore, and the greatest impediment to this dream is Hindu Kashmir. Kashmir is the neighbour of Afghanistan and China. It is not far removed from Soviet Russia. The pan-Islamic dream comes nearer fulfilment when the key State ceases to be governed by a Hindu ruler. And though it is said that this dream has not yet entered practical politics, it is at least held tenaciously by a few Mohammedan *littérateurs*. Mr Gandhi is not the only leader who believes that " ideas rule the world." There are, in fact, men who believe that the Indian problem will not be finally solved until the country has been partitioned. They predict a Mohammedan India in the North and a Hindu India in the South. Partition may be a tragedy. Yet in Ireland the tragedy has been already enacted.

Unhappily, Kashmir is not the only State to be isolated by an alien religion. It so happened that its plight caused grave concern to the greatest of the Mohammedan rulers in India. His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad rules over a State that is as large as Fascist Italy. Though this wealthy Prince descends from the last of the Moghul Viceroys, and is thus a figure venerated in the Mohammedan world, nearly ninety per cent. of his subjects are Hindus. If the Kashmiri dynasty is an anachronism, so is a Mohammedan Nizam—and the Nizam married his son to the daughter of the last of the Caliphs. Mohammedans had only to rise against the Maharajah of Kashmir and the Hindus would retaliate by expelling the Nizam. Against such a background there was something almost preposterous

about Mr Gandhi's claim that Congress represented the mind of India.

In vain, Mr Gandhi paraded the Moslem Nationalists. Their leader, Dr Ansari, professed to have behind him all the *intelligentsia* of Mohammedan India. Ageing men, he argued, forget the potency of the young. Within ten years the generation of students can become the governing generation. A new generation is now rising to power. It does not like non-violence, which, it hopes, will die with Gandhi. It has set its face against communalism, for it believes that communalism provides positions for the job-hunters at the expense of more talented people. One does not need to be a very clever job-hunter in order to see that it pays to be a Mohammedan in a Hindu province and a Hindu in a Mohammedan province. But with communalism would go other religious sanctions, for these young men are no longer orthodox. They may agree with Mr Gandhi that communalism must disappear; but they also laugh at the Mahatma. And because of their irreligion it seemed that the Mahatma had some excuse for not establishing a sympathetic contact with men thirty or forty years younger than himself.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Followers Revolt

SUDDENLY the work achieved by the Round Table Conference seemed to be undone. The blow came from a most unexpected quarter. The Maharajah of Patiala announced that he no longer believed in Federation. The Maharajah of Patiala is the Disraeli of India, and in his youth he was the handsomest and probably the most athletic of all the Indian Princes. As Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes he came to London for the first session of the Round Table Conference. He liked London. Unfortunately, he liked Paris still more, and he had a truly Disraelian distaste for conferences. The Chancellor was compelled to sign many documents, and some of them extolled the virtues of Federation. The signing of documents, however, is not work, and the industrious Maharajah of Bikaner—the Gladstone of India—soon found that all the work was falling to him. It is not, perhaps, surprising that on his return to India the Maharajah of Patiala should have failed to be re-elected as Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. In his place sat the youthful Nawab of Bhopal, a Mohammedan Prince who is known to be a warm friend and admirer of Mr Gandhi. The Maharajah of Patiala did not like his defeat. Yet he determined to be a diligent student of the affairs of the Conference. In the calmer environment of his own capital, he was able to re-read the weighty documents to which he had appended his signature while he was in London. They caused him to develop moral doubts.

The Maharajah managed to gather other Princes round him. Not a few came from Kathiawar, where Ota and Kaba Gandhi are no longer remembered. Their chief

adviser was the aged Sir Prabhashanker Pattani, Prime Minister of Bhavnagar, the State in which Mr Gandhi began his ignominious college career. His beard gives him a close resemblance to Dr Rabindranath Tagore. His clothes are often homespun, for years ago Mr Gandhi persuaded him to spend a certain number of hours daily in spinning. Spinning, he told his friends, helped him to think, and Sir Prabhashanker is a man who thinks aloud. When he was approaching sixty he journeyed to London, and took up dancing, so that he might make himself more amenable socially to the English. But even as he danced he thought aloud; and if any of his dancing partners were intelligent enough to remember, they would be able to record the evolution of a political wisdom so different fundamentally from the English version of the progressive realization of self-government and democracy, so completely indigenous and wholesome, that they would have wished that the English in India could go back fifty years, and make an altogether fresh approach to reform. But which of our women statesmen has been a good dancer?

Federation alarmed Sir Prabhashanker Pattani. It struck a mortal blow at his vision of independence of the India of the States within a greater Indian unity. He developed a new method which he called Confederation. The Indian States were to confederate with each other before they federated with the Provinces of British India. The advantages of such a scheme are not easy to detect; but it helped to rally the Princes who were opposed to the proposals of the Maharajah of Bikaner. The agitation became so great that it did not seem to matter whether Mr Gandhi stayed in his *ashram* or went to London. Indeed, it took no little time for Indian opinion to realize that the revolt of the Maharajah of Patiala and his followers was not a fatal blow to the cause of Federation, and that the final fight

could be postponed until the Conference actually met in London.

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While the Maharajah of Patiala was striding through the Taj Mahal Hotel with his aged adviser, a far more significant event took place behind the scenes of the Congress Working Committee. This was nothing less than a revolt against the Gandhi autocracy. Mr Gandhi, realizing that Hindu-Moslem unity was not possible, announced that he would not go to London.

The Working Committee decided otherwise. It had suddenly developed views of its own, and those views were not of the Mahatma's making. There were members, like Mrs Sarojini Naidu, who sincerely wanted the Conference to succeed, and the Liberal leaders were relying upon them to bring Mr Gandhi to reason. There were others, like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Vallabhbhai Patel, who were in no mood to exonerate Mr Gandhi from the consequences of the Delhi Pact. It was not their fault that the Delhi Pact had committed Mr Gandhi to a policy not strictly in accordance with Congress views. Mr Gandhi, for all his prestige, was not the President of the Congress. That honour fell to Mr Vallabhbhai Patel, and perhaps there were moments when he sincerely believed that he would make a better leader than Mr Gandhi. Mr Patel was more prepared to listen to advice, even when that advice came from Englishmen. He had been a first-class President of the Municipal Council in Ahmedabad. He had constructive ability. More extreme than the Mahatma, he was less erratic, and when he spoke few could pretend to misunderstand what he was saying. Outside the Working Committee there were men who openly declared that Mr Gandhi's visit to London would enable either Mr Patel or Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to capture the leadership of the

Congress, and no doubt similar reports were whispered within the Working Committee itself. So it came to pass that those who favoured the Conference momentarily allied themselves with the others who detested it. The Working Committee overruled Mr Gandhi's objections. It told him bluntly that he must leave for London—with or without communal concord.

This attack from within his own camp was a serious blow. Mr Gandhi tried to explain in the columns of *Young India* what had happened. It was in vain that he hinted at a permanent suspension of the struggle in order to relieve the sufferings of the peasantry. All India would soon know that he was to act not as a virtual dictator, but as a representative of Congress who had to voice the well-considered opinions of his colleagues; and it was scarcely a consolation that his colleagues were willing to make him their sole representative at the Conference in London. If they had overruled him once, they could overrule him again. It was in the long run better for the Working Committee that they should be represented by one man at the Conference instead of by several. If the entire Congress delegation endorsed the work of the London Conference, it would be difficult for the extremists to oppose what they had done. But if an individual—however eminent—reached an agreement with the Liberals and the British Government, it would be comparatively easy to repudiate him. Mr Gandhi was now the servant in an organization of which he had once been master.

In despair Mr Gandhi turned to the problem of the Untouchables. Whatever else he could or could not do at the Conference, he would at least convince Englishmen that he was the natural guardian of the Untouchables. He would see that no communal settlement perpetuated their Untouchability. Yet, while talking with their leaders, he

received one of the rudest shocks of his life. He was told by a comparatively young man called Dr Ambedkhar that his leadership had ended. The Untouchables were not prepared to pursue Mr Gandhi's policy at the Round Table Conference. Mr Gandhi was free to press the view that Untouchables should be permitted to vote as Hindus in general constituencies; but this was not to be the official view of the chosen representative of their community. Dr Ambedkhar and his followers had made up their minds that there must be separate electorates for the Untouchables.

Dr Ambedkhar was not to be persuaded. He had fought all his life against an unjust environment. A missionary college in Bombay gave him the facilities for education that would otherwise have been denied him. Somehow or other he managed to reach London, and from London he migrated to New York, where he entered Columbia University, and soon impressed his American contemporaries by his combative sincerity. He was a man of great promise. His gifts would have assured him a lucrative position in any part of the United States or Europe, and it was not long before he was facing the temptation to remain out of India permanently. Other Untouchables have left their native and hostile land never to return. Even so, some of the ablest Anglo-Indians—formerly called Eurasians—have left India and completely ignored the impoverished and despised community to which they belong. Among them are men whose names are known from one end of the Empire to the other. Not one among them has returned to India to speak on behalf of the kinsmen he dare not recognize. Young Ambedkhar might well have followed their example. He might have embraced the Mohammedan faith, so that his children, if ever they visited India, should know nothing of their origin.

The great temptation was overcome. Dr Ambedkhar vowed that he would serve his community, and one day he returned quietly to India. He did not know that his community would eventually make him a leader. Mr Gandhi's leadership is sentimental and assumed. Dr Ambedkhar's leadership is actual. In the summer of 1931 Mr Gandhi had to think of Federation, Hindu-Mohammedan unity, the implementing of the Delhi Pact, and many other things besides. Dr Ambedkhar thought only of the defence of his community. He knew, moreover, that he was an abler man than the Mahatma. Their temperaments were bound to clash.

Hitherto, not even his worst enemies had accused Mr Gandhi of indifference to the Untouchables. Why should his authority now be challenged by the Untouchables themselves? The attack wounded him deeply. He could bring with him neither Hindu-Mohammedan unity nor proposals that would assure the welfare of the Untouchables. . . . The seeds that brought the second Round Table Conference to ruin were already sown. It was incredible that—in the face of this double defeat—his friends should wish Mr Gandhi to go to London at all. His task would be hopeless. Moreover, the Congress had no alternative to the constitutional proposals made by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr Jayakar and the Maharajah of Bikaner. Its representatives—whether they were a group of men or Mr Gandhi alone—would have either to endorse all that was done at the first Conference or else conspire to bring the Conference to failure. To conspiracy Mr Gandhi would not agree. If he went to London at all, it would be for the purpose of peace. But if he sat at the Round Table and approved what Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jayakar were doing, then his extremist followers would declare that he was betraying them. Mr Gandhi could not hope to

control Indian opinion six thousand miles away. Congressmen would do to him what the Afghans had recently done to their King, and what, twelve years before, the Americans had done to their President.

There was only one way of escape. Mr Gandhi would force a quarrel with either the Government of India or the Government of Bombay. He turned once more to the Delhi Pact. His lieutenants were collecting volumes of incriminatory evidence. The Pact, for one thing, was proving difficult to implement. There were mistakes, particularly during the first few weeks. The most conscientious Collectors in India were unable to produce faultless officers, still less ideal conditions for the fulfilment of their tasks; and mistakes are easy to magnify. By confining his attentions to Gujerat, Mr Gandhi had ample material with which to force a quarrel with the Government of Bombay. Sir Frederick Sykes, the Governor, had recently gone home on sick leave. In his absence, Sir Ernest Hotson assumed the responsibilities of Acting-Governor. Sir Ernest is an able and conscientious Indian Civil Servant of the old school, and he has managed successfully to live down an early reputation for being a Scottish Radical. There is no man who has—behind the façade of Scottish cautiousness—a more generous love for India. But he could not forgive Mr Gandhi for his assault upon the administration, when every civil servant under his leadership was sincerely endeavouring to carry out the terms of the Delhi Pact. Mr Gandhi's criticisms, he suspected, were just a trick to save himself from the duty of going to London, and Sir Ernest is a bureaucrat who detests the wiles of the politician.

Mr Gandhi's own friends grew anxious. The delegates to the Conference were assembling in Bombay. In a day or two the *Mooltan* would sail for Europe. Mrs Naidu gazed

anxiously at the *saris* she expected to wear when she called on her friends in London. What would happen? At the last minute Mr Gandhi was complaining about infringements in which few seriously believed. Then he took the train to Ahmedabad. The *Mooltan* sailed without its principal passenger. Preparations for an adequate supply of goat's milk had been a waste of time.

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Once the delegates were on board the *Mooltan* they realized that the absence of Mr Gandhi would profoundly affect their own fortunes at the Conference. The Princes who supported Federation and the Liberal delegates were unmistakably distressed. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jayakar might be the last people to be impressed by Mahatma-worship. None the less, they were men without a party. They were, as someone said, " amiable gentlemen who represented no one but themselves." They might devise a perfect Federal Constitution for India; but without a party they were helpless. If they had the brains, Mr Gandhi had the party. The rank and file among Congressmen were not to know how strained were Mr Gandhi's relations with Dr Ambedkhar, nor how energetically other Mohammedan leaders repudiated Dr Ansari's claim to be the spokesman of a Nationalist Mohammedan public. For the rank and file, at least, Mr Gandhi's was still the voice of India. When the All-India Federation came into existence, what was to stop the electors from giving Congress a large majority in the Federal Assembly as well as in the greater number of Provincial Legislatures? Without Mr Gandhi's support, neither Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru nor Mr Jayakar could hope to get elected to the Federal Assembly. The leaders on board the *Mooltan* knew that there was a conspiracy against Mr Gandhi within the Congress Working Committee. They knew that, when the

time was ripe, Congress might expel him. But Congress, by expelling Mr Gandhi, would expel in all probability half its members; and that was the half Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jayakar wished to attach to the Liberal cause. They never disguised the fact that Mr Gandhi was, in their own words, " muddle-headed." It was worth winning a " muddle-headed " leader when he could bring with him a million " muddle-headed " followers. Cables flashed from the *Mooltan* to the India Office and Viceregal Lodge as the boat forged her way through the angry monsoon-waters of the Arabian Sea. The Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State for India were agreed that Mr Gandhi must be encouraged to come to London, and the new Viceroy, ever amenable to advice from the India Office, agreed to see Mr Gandhi in Simla. There was no longer any doubt that Lord Willingdon would allow an inquiry into the methods of implementing the Delhi Pact which the harassed Government of Bombay had adopted.

This correspondence was almost the last official action of Mr Wedgwood Benn as the Secretary of State. The great financial crisis made the English nation suddenly forget Mr Gandhi. Crowds surged up and down Whitehall on a Sunday evening, uncertain whether Mr Ramsay MacDonald or Mr Baldwin was the Prime Minister. As the *Mooltan* sailed northwards, the delegates learned that Sir Samuel Hoare had succeeded Mr Wedgwood Benn. The Conference, a cable assured them, was to proceed as though nothing had happened. Then they heard that Mr Gandhi was on his way to Bombay. By allowing the inquiry Lord Willingdon had destroyed Mr Gandhi's last opportunity of avoiding the Conference. A special train was ordered for the man who persists in travelling third-class, and officials spent a few anxious hours wondering whether the special train would reach the harbour-side in

time. No one can ever have been less willing to sail for the British Isles—except, perhaps, Roger Casement, when, at the bidding of Germany, he set out on a mission that he knew to be hopeless.

The delegates from the *Mooltan* returned to an altered England. When the P. & O. special train reached Boulogne they were hustled about by English people who in their thousands were making a sudden return to London. Their arrival at Victoria attracted very little attention. Who could bother about reforms for India when the English by their providential good sense had just saved themselves from the loss of the gold standard?

There were crowds later on in the streets. It became almost impossible to drive through the Strand at night. Yet there was not a trace of revolution; for the people were merely watching the principal buildings of the Metropolis flood-lit during an electricity convention. A delegate went to see the flood-lighting of St Paul's Cathedral. The golden cross was reflected in the sky. " There has been nothing like it," someone announced, " since the angels at Mons."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

At the Palace

ALMOST exactly forty-five years after his appearance at Southampton in an immaculate white suit, Mr Gandhi, clad in a *dhoti* and enveloped in a Kashmir shawl, tripped down the gangway at Marseilles. Behind him came Mrs Sarojini Naidu, in a brilliant *sari*; Miraben, in a *sari* of *khaddar*, awkwardly worn; Mr Mahadev Desai, the faithful scribe; Pandit Malaviya, making the pilgrimage against which his orthodox mind rebelled; even the venerable Sir Prabhashanker Pattani, Prime Minister of Bhavnagar, amiably convinced that, with a Mahatma in London, all the main problems before the Conference were about to be solved. At the end of the retinue were journalists who had travelled with the Mahatma for the purpose of broadcasting his daily actions and weekly silences to the Press of Europe and America. Those activities were not exciting, and a prominent, but desperate, journalist was compelled to invent a cat who, while on board, shared the Mahatma's goat's milk.

On the landing-stage stood all the notables of Marseilles as well as an army of journalists from London. It was a curious spectacle. The chief actor was himself so garrulous that the notables of Marseilles knew not how to receive him. They escorted him solemnly to the special train that was waiting at the quayside, and Mr Gandhi observed with apparent regret that no third-class accommodation had been provided for him. An English railway official would have overcome the difficulty by chalking the legendary "third-class" outside the door of a first-class compartment; but the French, despite M. Romain Rolland, do not

find Mr Gandhi's humour easy to understand. The report soon spread through France that "Le Mahatma est un grand comique."

Mr Gandhi was met at Folkestone by a few friends and by Sergeant Evans and Sergeant Rogers, who, in accordance with a time-honoured English tradition, were to protect the Mahatma from the would-be assassin. The sergeants and the friends motored with him to London, and deposited him outside the Friends' Meeting House, where Mr Laurence Housman and others had assembled to give him a welcome. Across the road, and in the pouring rain, stood a few hundred spectators, who were themselves besieged by cranks with pamphlets to distribute or grievances to manufacture against the ill-clad guest of His Majesty's Government. Near by was a band and a few spectacled ladies holding banners. They were the remnants of the League against Imperialism. Now that Mr Gandhi had made his Pact with Lord Irwin, they reckoned him among the enemies of Freedom. Perhaps they were right.

Mr Gandhi left the Meeting House quickly, and a row of cars followed Sergeant Evans and Sergeant Rogers in their drive through the half-deserted streets of the City. As they reached Aldgate—it was tea-time on a Saturday afternoon—traffic became thicker, and when Sergeant Evans and Sergeant Rogers succeeded in defying all traffic signals, inquisitive van-drivers and bus-drivers looked at once for a reason. They peered into the long line of cars, and they saw the "half-naked *fakir*." "Oh! 'Im!—Gandhi"; and they were hardly wrong in thinking that Mr Gandhi was laughing with them. Outside Kingsley Hall, where Mr Gandhi was to stay, stood the Mayor and officials of Bow, with some hundreds of Bow's inhabitants. A roar of laughter greeted the guest of His Majesty's Government. The Mahatma was, indeed, "un grand comique."

Meanwhile, the spectacled ladies outside the Friends' Meeting House had taken up their bedraggled banners, and were trying to keep in step with the band as it piped them through the murky streets of Bloomsbury. The League against Imperialism was not showing to the best advantage. And Mrs Naidu had stepped into a car that was to take her, not to Bow, but to Park Place. Congress was to be represented in the West End as well as in the East.

On the following evening Mr Gandhi broadcast a message to the United States, and then Sergeant Evans and Sergeant Rogers arrived to escort him to the Dorchester Hotel, where he was to meet the Prime Minister and other British delegates to the Round Table Conference. The Prime Minister, he was soon to learn, would be affable, but correct. He had a few words to say to Mr Gandhi, but no more. There were other people to whom he must talk—the Chief Minister of Hyderabad, the Dewan of Mysore, the Prime Minister of Bhavnagar. It was wrong tactically to confine one's attention to Mr Gandhi: so the new Viceroy thought, when he refused to see Mr Gandhi in Bombay; so the Prime Minister was thinking now. The delegates looked at each other despairingly: Mr MacDonald and Mr Gandhi were not to become friends.

Next day Sergeant Evans and Sergeant Rogers drove before Mr Gandhi as he set out for the Royal Palace of St James's. The car wheeled into the courtyard; Guardsmen stood stiffly to attention. The Lord Chancellor welcomed the distinguished delegates. The Secretary of State spoke a few words. Then serious work began. The proceedings seemed to be interminable and even unreal. Mr Gandhi had neither sympathy with the Palace and its surroundings—there was never an artist in him to destroy—nor understanding of the constitutional issues involved in Federation. He soon looked bored. A word or two might

have worked a miracle. Mr Gandhi had listened intently while Sir Samuel Hoare was speaking. Here was a man who meant what he said, and who never pretended to be convinced when he was not. But from Mr Gandhi no word of encouragement could come. It was his day of silence.

And when, on the following day, no vow prevented the loosening of his tongue and he gave a minute exposition of the Congress policy, it was clear that he knew not how to talk to men over a table. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jayakar could do it, partly because they knew that they had the Lord Chancellor's sympathy; chiefly because they still practise at the Bar. Mr Gandhi needed a heart-to-heart talk more than anything else, and Mr Ramsay MacDonald, to judge from the first encounter, was in no mood to talk to him. In days gone by, he had heart-to-heart talks with Lord Irwin, and now Lord Irwin stayed at Garrowby and prepared for a season's hunting. Yet Mr Robert Bernays spoke the truth when, in the vivid pages of *Naked Fakir*, he said that Lord Irwin should not let Mr Gandhi out of his sight.

Apart from heart-to-heart talks with the British delegates, Mr Gandhi sought heart-to-heart talks with the men whom he judged to be his most powerful adversaries—Mr Winston Churchill, Lord Rothermere and Lord Beaverbrook. They had not attempted to meet him, though he was sure that if only he could talk with them alone they would understand his point of view. One day, as he was about to leave the Palace, a visiting card was brought to him. It was from Mr Randolph Churchill. Mr Gandhi almost ran to greet him; and he bore as gently as he could the discovery that Mr Randolph Churchill had come, not as his father's emissary, but on a journalistic errand.

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It was a comfort to return from the stilted, business-like atmosphere of the Conference Room to the people who

lived round Kingsley Hall at Bow. Parts of the East End of London are as drab as Ahmedabad itself. The cells at the top of Kingsley Hall, in which Mr Gandhi and the *entourage* were sleeping, reminded one curiously of Mr Gandhi's headquarters in Bombay. Here it was almost possible to live an Indian life. One could rise before four and walk abroad without being dubbed an eccentric. Kingsley Hall belongs to the people. In and out walk men in search of work and women with grievances or joys to share. The East End knows how to put the foreigner at his ease: for instance, it did not need Charlie Brown, the great Cockney publican, to defend the Chinese at Limehouse. Bow took to Mr Gandhi immediately. Children who flocked round him were soon calling him their Uncle Gandhi.

Delegates bore this state of affairs for a week, and then complained. Mr Gandhi's chief mission in London, they insinuated, was to bring the Conference to a successful conclusion. Some of the most important work of the Conference was naturally to be done in informal talks outside the Palace. It cost the delegates too much to go to Bow by taxi; and who has heard of a delegate travelling by bus or Underground? Mr Gandhi listened with regret. He supposed that they were right. Yet his friends at Kingsley Hall were determined not to let him go. Miss Mary Hughes, daughter of the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, pleaded with him. "You can't go, brother," she said. And there was one delegate to agree with her. The Prime Minister of Bhavnagar so liked Bow that he asked for accommodation near by, since there was no room for him at Kingsley Hall. All he wanted was a bathroom with hot water and cleanliness. But bathrooms with hot water are almost unknown to the neighbourhood of Kingsley Hall, and Sir Prabhashanker Pattani returned sorrowfully to his expensive hotel and to his dispatches to the

Maharajah of Patiala on the progress of Confederation. It may have been as well; for the Maharajah was not likely to appreciate the fine point that the dispatches had been penned in the East End of London.

Other delegates pleaded with Mrs Sarojini Naidu. She searched for a house and found one eventually in Knightsbridge. The house belonged to the late eighteenth century and little, if any, of the furniture was less than seventy years old. Mr Gandhi insisted upon sleeping at Bow. "Whatever anyone says, nothing will induce me to tear myself from this neighbourhood. This is the real Round Table Conference work. I am getting at the heart of the people of England here." The delegates, however, insisted that, whether or not he slept at Bow, he should work and receive his colleagues at Knightsbridge. The *entourage* made the most of both Knightsbridge and Bow. They divided the visitors into those who should call at Knightsbridge and those who should call at Bow. Mr Charles Chaplin, of whose existence Mr Gandhi had hitherto known nothing, went to Bow; Mr Bernard Shaw went to Knightsbridge. It was an excellent discrimination. Visitors who went to Bow found first of all a merry collection of children and then a bright and happy little man squatting on the bare floor before a spinning-wheel. Visitors who went to Knightsbridge were led up a genteel flight of stairs to a drawing-room which almost suggested the Regency period. In front of an enormous fire, propped up by satin and velvet cushions, sat the impoverished saint of India. And if—as frequently happened—visitors were shown first of all into the waiting-room, they found but two books with which to relieve their boredom. One was Debrett's *Peerage*; the other was Burke's *Landed Gentry of Ireland*. Mr Gandhi had some excuse for preferring to remain at Bow.

Mr Gandhi was ready to see everyone—Mrs Clare

Sheridan, Brigadier-General Crozier, Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Rector of Bow, paying his compliments to a temporary parishioner, Miss Evelyn Underhill, Krishnamurti, the Archbishop of Canterbury. He stayed one week-end at the Deanery in Canterbury, and when he occupied a stall during Evensong, Canterbury society had something to discuss other than cricket and the cloister. Nor was the Dean's predecessor at Canterbury, the Bishop of Chichester, to be outdone in honouring the Mahatma; for on the following Saturday Mr Gandhi and his friends motored to Chichester. It seemed to have occurred neither to the Dean of Canterbury nor to the Bishop of Chichester that each was embracing a man who was by no means the ally of Christianity, though followers might claim that he was the friend of Christ. There were, once, more than sixty million Untouchables in India. To-day, according to at least one competent authority, that number has dwindled to less than thirty millions. Some have become converts to Islam; others converts to Christianity. By warring upon Untouchability Mr Gandhi has set fire to the chief recruiting grounds of Christians in India. Nothing is better calculated to limit conversions to Christianity in India than the reform of Hinduism from within. Or was Father Ronald Knox's *Reunion All Round* less fantastic than it seemed?

Eton and Oxford were not neglected. Mr Gandhi had met too many Etonians and Oxford men among sympathetic Englishmen in India to refuse invitations from the Head Boy at Eton or the Master of Balliol. It is said that many of his hearers at Eton went away disappointed. Lady Oxford, arriving late at an Eton meeting some years ago, asked what was happening. "Asquith is speaking," a youth told her, "but really you haven't been missing very much." He would probably have said the same thing of Mr Gandhi.

But in an audience of schoolboys some are very impressionable, and Mr Gandhi was no doubt right in believing that genuine Round Table Conference work had taken him to Eton.

In Oxford, Mr Gandhi was still more disappointing. If he came without book-learning or profound philosophy—if the road-making at Hinksey was the only one of Ruskin's numerous contributions to the welfare of Oxford that he could really admire—Mr Gandhi was faithful to the old motto: *Dominus illuminatio mea*. Dons who have never met a Methodist socially were prepared to speak in a reverential tone of the great Hindu religion; and Mr Gandhi, whether at Balliol or Boar's Hill, was surrounded by dons. They pursued him everywhere with their interrogations and theories of political science. "Please, please, Mr Gandhi, think it possible you may be mistaken." Mr Gandhi learned long ago to subdue his intellect to his will, and he had to disarm his critics either by agreeing with them or by laughing when they had cornered him in an argument. Dons shook their heads. Said the one who had professed to know him for many years: "Mr Gandhi is not the man he used to be."

The truth is that Mr Gandhi was lost in London, and the old assurance and resilience were deserting him. Day after day—in the Conference which he had come to detest—he faced the Mohammedan delegates who would yield none of their demands. Day after day Dr Ambedkar came into greater prominence. He spoke for the Untouchables, and every speech on the welfare of India—whether from a Conservative or a Socialist—would contain references to the tragic plight of the Untouchables. It was a sentimental rather than a practical concern. Mr Gandhi, by representing the Untouchables, would have drawn eulogies from almost every pulpit in England—but now Dr Ambedkar

had destroyed his platform. He so opposed the Mahatma that the public began to believe that two personalities dominated the Conference, Mr Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar. Nothing could have been further from the truth. To begin with, Mr Gandhi was not dominating the Conference nearly enough. He spoke once after Sir Samuel Hoare, whom he came to like more and more, had spoken in favour of indirect elections. Mr Gandhi agreed with him entirely, and then proceeded to elaborate his *panchayat* scheme, whereby villages elect their representative, a group of village representatives elect their district representative, and a group of district representatives elect the representative for the Legislature. It is a system which, while weakening Conservative fears, meets the Congress demand for adult suffrage. Indian Liberal delegates were warm in their approval. "Within a week," one of them said, "Gandhi will have the Conservatives at his feet." He never spoke in this fashion again. Instead, there was the wrangle with Dr Ambedkar. At first Mohammedans seemed to enjoy the Mahatma's discomfiture; but in time every delegate was wishing that Dr Ambedkar would show Mr Gandhi the courtesy to which his personal eminence certainly entitled him.

Mr Gandhi sought temporary relief by a visit to Lancashire. From the first, he had promised to go to Manchester. He could not deny a partial responsibility for the misfortunes of the cotton operatives. But in the eyes of discontented delegates the visit was an unpardonable interruption of Round Table Conference work.

Once more statesmen and people, however, forgot India and the Conference. They had failed, after all, to save the gold standard, and now they wanted a General Election, to show confidence in the Government they already possessed. A young Liberal who has some claims to be called the

friend of India protested against this political madness. "If Gandhi dropped down dead at Bow," he complained, "the newspapers would relegate the announcement to a back page." Within a week he was himself fighting for a Parliamentary seat, as a supporter of the National Government. Another Englishman who knew India well volunteered his services as a speaker, provided he was not asked to support a candidate who had been hostile to the clamour for reform in India. The party headquarters advised him sternly to keep India out of his speeches. "This election is being fought on domestic issues," they said.

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Thus the Emergency Government became the National Government. The Conservatives were in, and the Indian delegates, with an unerring sense of political realities in a country other than their own, knew that it was with the Conservative point of view that they must deal.

The advocates of Confederation knew it. Hitherto the Maharajah of Dholpur, whose views corresponded with those of the Maharajah of Patiala, had not been successful in his encounters with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at St James's Palace. Now, however, there were many new Conservative Members of Parliament ready to show sympathy; and his cause gained strength when the Prime Minister of Indore informed Conservative acquaintances that his young ruler, who recently left Oxford, shared the views of the Maharajah of Dholpur.

The Mohammedans knew it. True, the Nawab of Bhopal, the young Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, had dangerous sympathies with Mr Gandhi and whole-heartedly supported the idea of Federation. True also, the Nizam of Hyderabad, premier Prince of India, gave qualified, but none the less vital, support to Federation. Yet the views of the Mohammedan politicians from British India were

sufficiently definite. They wanted more provinces—the Province of Sind and a Governor's Province for the North-West Frontier were not yet promised—and they wanted all those provinces to be strong.

The Indian Liberals knew it. They found some consolation, it is true, in the fact that Lord Sankey, Lord Lothian and Mr Thomas remained with the Government and so provided a pro-Indian group for the inner councils of Downing Street. Lord Sankey and Lord Lothian, they whispered, were in the Government only because they wanted to strengthen the Prime Minister's position when the new colleagues assailed his Indian policy: they would have resigned if there had been any retrogression from the agreements reached at the first Round Table Conference. There were other members of the Cabinet who were ready to give the Prime Minister full support, notably Sir Herbert Samuel and Lord Snowden. But with the ammunition supplied first by the princely faction and the Mohammedans and then by the pitiable failure to reach a communal agreement, how could other members of the Cabinet resist the plea that Provincial autonomy should precede Federation?

Members of the Cabinet were not expected to realize this position immediately. They had to recover from the fever of electioneering and then from the exhilaration of overwhelming majorities. Many days were to pass before the Cabinet was to take the Indian problem once more out of its political cupboard. The Indian Liberals, however, saw at a glance what the position would be. They agreed among themselves that, if Federation was to be deferred, Provincial autonomy must be deferred too. They had finished with the policy of reform by instalment. They knew, moreover, that reform by instalment would never please the people of India. They were older—far older—than the majority of Indians who complain impatiently of

Mr Gandhi and other leaders that they are Tories in disguise. A year ago these Liberal leaders had come to London and risked the calumny of their countrymen engaged upon a Civil Disobedience movement. They had been compelled to bring back to India the substance of reform, or their reputations would have vanished ignominiously. And they had at least succeeded in bringing back a tentative scheme which was to embrace all the Princes and peoples of India in a single Federation. They were not prepared to witness, still less to participate in, the frustration of their scheme.

Yet their scheme was in grave peril, even before the new Cabinet was to give it a preliminary consideration. The cry that disunity among the Princes and the failure to reach a communal settlement made Federation impossible, or at least inopportune, was so facile and plausible that some of India's best friends responded to it. The Liberals prepared for action immediately. They saw that even now Mr Gandhi could occupy a key position. All he had to do was to preside over the various meetings that were thrashing out the communal question, accept whatever decision was reached, and leave all constitutional questions severely alone. The Liberal leaders were willing to give the Mohammedans whatever they claimed; and if a communal settlement were achieved they would give to Mr Gandhi all the praise and credit, whether he deserved it or not.

But silence is not always Mr Gandhi's most effective quality. Delegates remembered that, on the day after Great Britain departed from the gold standard, Sir Samuel Hoare invited Mr Gandhi to call at the India Office, so that he might explain to him the effect such an event would have upon the rupee. "But I understand nothing whatever about currency," Mr Gandhi declared, with disarming frankness. Yet within twenty-four hours the wealthier

delegates were telling him that the departure from the gold standard was a betrayal of Indian interests, and Mr Gandhi found no happiness until he could announce that this departure was but another instance of the economic exploitation of the dumb masses of India. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and his friends heard this wild talk unperturbed. They had not forbidden him to speak of economics or of finance. It was on Federation alone, the constitutional steel-frame of the new political India, that they commanded his silence. Unhappily, when Mr Gandhi next paid a visit to Oxford, and sat once more amid obsequious dons, he announced that he was prepared to accept Provincial autonomy; he was prepared to accept Provincial autonomy, Mr—now Sir Edward—Benthall told a Calcutta audience a few weeks later, " as a means of bringing to a deadlock all Central Government." Though Mr Gandhi knew as much about Federation as he knew about currency, his words floated swiftly to the India Office. The new Cabinet received its cue.

The communal wrangle grew worse. There were daily reports that the Maharajah of Kashmir was about to abdicate, and it was futile to deny that many of the plots against him were of British Indian manufacture. Feelings were naturally exacerbated, though the saner Mohammedans were merely playing for position, and some of the unhappier features of the wrangle might not have appeared if Mr Ramsay MacDonald had boldly announced his approval of new Mohammedan Provinces before the Conference ended; but this would have meant bringing India to the notice of the Cabinet sooner than he wished to do.

Mr Gandhi's dread of the Conference—a dread which had made him turn from the vital work of preparation to a finicking inquisitiveness into the Government of India's methods of implementing the Delhi Pact—was more than

justified by circumstances. Every hour spent in St James's Palace seemed to weaken his authority. He would forget his grievances by indulging in the great friendliness of London. He surrounded himself with the children of Bow, who on his birthday sent him a letter accompanied by a basket containing two woolly dogs, three pink birthday candles, a tin plate, a blue pencil, and some jelly sweets. Mr Gandhi treasured these gifts with the affection Mr Polak's bride once wanted to bestow upon her lace curtains and thin muslin. Everywhere there were people anxious to meet him. He would speak at Oxford House; discuss religion with Lady Astor, as he plied his spinning-wheel on the hearthrug of her drawing-room in St James's Square; call upon the Archbishop of Canterbury. Religion, to his amazement, was a subject which all Englishmen love to discuss, once they have overcome a preliminary shyness; and when he first met the Under-Secretary of State for India face to face, Lord Lothian was in the company of a Christian Science lecturer.

On the 11th of November his car was passing through Trafalgar Square when the great Armistice crowd held it up. He was cheerfully but quietly recognized. The guns heralded the two minutes' silence. There was no sound except the flutter of pigeons. London was paying her tribute to " the glorious dead." " I've been in the silence before in India," Mr Gandhi said at last.

The silence of the prisoner's cell?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Great Failure

Visits to sympathetic friends continued. Mr Gandhi was able to call on Lord Irwin when he made a brief stay in London, and one day he drove down to Churt to see Mr Lloyd George. The two men talked together for more than three hours. Mr Gandhi reviewed the entire situation, as he saw it, in India, and he was not a little disturbed by the fact that Mr Lloyd George agreed with everything he said. They had in common an irrepressible sense of humour and a great charm of manner; and if Mr Gandhi grew occasionally impatient with his *entourage*, Mr Lloyd George was hardly less impatient with the more pompous members of his Cabinet. Mr Gandhi left Churt, perhaps, regretting that Mr Lloyd George was no longer the Prime Minister. Yet it was Mr Lloyd George who made the promises England appeared so reluctant to carry out. He was the head of the Government which sanctioned the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, approved for a while the Rowlatt Acts, and gave Lord Reading full support in his early repressive measures. Was Mr Lloyd George so pleasant in office as he was now, not merely in opposition but in semi-retirement? And would Mr Ramsay MacDonald, who was too busy to give him a heart-to-heart talk, and who, when he referred to "my Indian friends," always included Mr Gandhi's most obnoxious opponents, soften and grow wise when he had relinquished the cares of Downing Street?

A still more welcome encounter was with his old opponent General Smuts, who was in London to preside over the centenary meeting of the British Association. The two men had not met each other for eighteen years. In the

long interval, each played an elusive part on the world's stage. Each changed his political faith. Gandhi, championing the rights of Indians in Natal and the Transvaal, had not consciously doubted that the British Empire existed for the good of mankind. In that faith he donned khaki during the Boer War and the Zulu Rebellion. In that faith he became a recruiting officer in India during the Great War. Then events shook this faith in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Perhaps, though he did not know it, the first crack in the foundations of this faith appeared when he encountered the short-tempered Political Officer at Rajkot. Then came the onslaught of other events—the failure to reward Indian endeavour during the Boer War with the removal of racial legislation, the evasiveness of Lord Elgin, the Rowlatt Acts, and, by no means the least important, the former attitude of General Smuts to the Indian problem in his own country.

General Smuts, fighting bravely and brilliantly against British forces, accepted the ignominy of defeat. He honoured reluctantly the *régime* imposed by Lord Milner. Then he persuaded his countrymen that separation was a mistake, and when the Great War opened, General Smuts offered loyal support. He brought a new vision of Empire and a new doctrine of the monarchy as the symbol of union between the free and equal members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. He was an Imperialist with a breadth of outlook which not even Joseph Chamberlain had acquired. Just when the Irish Treaty was signed, General Smuts wrote a long letter to Mr de Valera to show why he should not lightly discard the benefits which such a Treaty was to confer upon his country; and when Lord Irwin was about to quit the Viceroyalty, and political circles in London and in Delhi discussed likely successors, the name of General Smuts was frequently mentioned and canvassed.

Nor was the change of faiths the only remarkable contrast which the two leaders provided. Gandhi, the saint, the ascetic, the minister of healing, was more engrossed in the political fight than he had ever been before. Smuts, the soldier, the orator, the born Parliamentarian, found well-won leisure in opposition. He had written and published an exhaustive book on *Holism*, and now he was in London conversing on equal terms with the savants of the West. It was almost as though the one had become what the other wished to be.

Such personal contacts as these Mr Gandhi longed to have. Yet General Smuts could not solve his problem for him. Nor could help have come from Lord Irwin. Of necessity there was a profound difference between Lord Irwin the Viceroy and Lord Irwin the country gentleman at Garrowby who, for all he knew then, would never again be invited to join a Cabinet. Lord Irwin could give encouragement, but not leadership; it was not for him to embarrass his successor in Delhi. Rather it was for Mr Gandhi so to dominate the Conference that Lord Irwin and many others who had publicly expressed their confidence in the Mahatma could be rescued from an ill-deserved contempt.

Respites from the Round Table Conference grew fewer and briefer. The communal dispute stared the Mahatma in the face. The Minorities Sub-Committee met four times, and on each occasion it met only to adjourn. The Prime Minister, as Chairman, lectured the members on their inability to reach a settlement, but it was of no avail.

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Moreover, the mail was bringing still grimmer reports from India. The Working Committee of Congress was by no means satisfied with the labours of Mr Gandhi, Mrs Naidu and Pandit Malaviya. If they could not do better,

they said, their representatives should come home, and on one occasion Mr Gandhi motored down to Oxford, and his new acquaintances at Boar's Hill, to decide whether or not he should return to India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was preparing more vigorously than before for the agrarian revolution in the United Provinces, and he was urging his followers to maintain the "war mentality." Congress, as represented by Mr Vallabhbhai Patel and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was making every possible preparation for war. In a great political club in London stayed Mr V. J. Patel, the former President of the Legislative Assembly. He was not, indeed, a member of the Round Table Conference, but he knew all the gossip of the Conference, and he was able to tell his friends in India—and especially his own brother and other members of the Working Committee—something of Mr Gandhi's behaviour in London. Enough mischief, in the view of his friends, had been done when he was allowed to be closeted alone with the ex-Viceroy in Delhi. Now he was being closeted with Sir Samuel Hoare, Lord Irwin, Mr Lloyd George, General Smuts. He was growing sentimental about his English friendships. He boasted openly of his liking for the stiff and precise Sir Samuel Hoare. A wave of sentiment might sweep Mr Gandhi into the British fold. It was necessary, therefore, for the Working Committee so to organize opposition that it could, if necessary, repudiate Mr Gandhi on his return to India.

In the darkest hour of the Conference's fortunes there came the royal summons to Buckingham Palace. Forty years ago, Mr Gandhi stood anxiously in front of his looking-glass adjusting the hair beneath the silk hat, before he set out with Narayan Hemchandra for his audience with the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. Now he was driving to Buckingham Palace in the familiar shawl, loin-cloth and sandals. There was nothing else for him to wear, since he

made himself one with the poorest peasants of India and their dress became his uniform. In the Palace of the King-Emperor he was to wear this uniform with the same ease and pride that William Booth, when presented to King Edward, had worn his uniform as General of the Salvation Army.

It is a quick transition from Buckingham Palace to the tenements of Bow, where children shouted their greetings and begged him to see the swings in their recreation-ground. The one was as much a part of London as the other. The unwieldiness of the Metropolis has not utterly destroyed its family spirit. Rich men and women who discussed religion with him were not different from the children who sent him a basket with two woolly dogs, three pink birthday candles, a tin plate, a blue pencil, and some jelly sweets. Whatever else happened, this man of no possessions would keep the toys.

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But while Mr Gandhi unburdened his thoughts to prelates and Christian Science lecturers, to statesmen in opposition like General Smuts and Mr Lloyd George, other members of the Conference were making headway with the Communal problem. If they could not reach an agreement under the honorary presidency of Mr Gandhi, they would meet without him. Henceforward Bow and Knightsbridge were not to be the only centres for Conference plotting. Representatives of the Mohammedans, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Untouchables met together. In a very short period of time they had drawn up a Minorities Pact, to which every representative of the Minorities—with the notable exception of the Sikh leader, Sardar Ujjal Singh—appended his signature. Mr Benthall sent Mr Gandhi a copy of the Pact and a courteous, if rather buoyant, explanatory letter. Dr Ambedkar met Mr Gandhi's gaze at

St James's with an almost defiant smile. There were but two obvious courses open to Mr Gandhi. One was to accept the decision of the Minorities with whatever grace he could summon. The other was to rally the great Hindu majority to his side; to speak not as the sole representative of Congress, but as the spokesman of all the Hindus—the orthodox Hindu Mahasabha included. Mr Gandhi's eyes travelled swiftly down the clauses of the Pact. He saw at once that the Pact vindicated the truculent attitude which Dr Ambedkar had adopted, for separate electorates were generously bestowed upon the Untouchables. Obvious courses were not for Mr Gandhi. If, hitherto, he had been uncertain of his mission in London, he knew now what it was his duty to do. He would save the Untouchables from their leader. He called on Sir Samuel Hoare. He even called on Mr Ramsay MacDonald, whom he for once impressed with the vehemence of his views.

Mr Gandhi would speak of nothing else. "Separate electorates to the Untouchables," he declared in a speech, "will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Musulmans will never cease to be Musulmans, by having separate electorates. Do you want the Untouchables to remain Untouchables for ever?" And, however lightly the Indian Liberal may regard Mr Gandhi's views on Federation, he has a healthy respect for his views on Minorities. A Minorities Pact falls far short of a general agreement, and because it provoked the hostility of the orthodox Hindus and the Sikhs—more particularly because it roused the anger of Mr Gandhi—the Pact died the day it was born. Its demise was promptly acknowledged by British and Indian delegates alike. The communal settlement, as everyone now admitted, would have to be imposed by the British Government.

Slowly, but surely, the Conservative members of the

Cabinet were reaching the conclusion which the Indian Liberal delegates had already foreseen—that India should receive Provincial autonomy before she received Federation. At the strategically correct moment the Indian Liberals issued a manifesto in which they proclaimed to the Cabinet and the Press of both countries that they would not accept Provincial autonomy without Federation. Mr Wedgwood Benn and Mr Lees Smith, as the Labour Party delegate to the Round Table Conference, took up this cry at St James's, and with such gusto that Lord Reading and Sir Samuel Hoare were compelled to deny that the Government seriously contemplated any other course of action. How Mr Ramsay MacDonald persuaded his Cabinet to follow in line with the manifesto of the Indian Liberals we shall never know, until Cabinet papers are made accessible to the student. Delegates who were not often wrong in their surmises hinted that Mr Ramsay MacDonald, assuming a split in the National Government to be inevitable, thought that the split might as well come over India. He wanted not merely the passive support of Conservative colleagues, but their active participation in the Parliamentary debates on a future White Paper. And when these debates eventually took place, even Lord Hailsham and Sir John Simon spoke with enthusiasm. Was Conservative opinion so easily reconciled? Or was the master spirit none other than Sir Samuel Hoare? Honest men have a habit of reaching conclusions uncomfortable to party feeling. Indians, as the *Mooltan* brought them northwards, heard of Sir Samuel Hoare's appointment with misgiving; but since then he had diligently studied Indian affairs and that study had been driving him steadily to the Irwinian policy. Mr Gandhi was right in deciding that Sir Samuel was the one man worthy of full consideration.

Since the National Government decided what its Indian

policy was to be, the time for closing the Conference had come. Mr Ramsay MacDonald agreed, therefore, to address the final session on 1st December. A day or two beforehand the Conference met in plenary session, and since almost every delegate felt it his duty to make a speech, each meeting continued far into the night. The early hours of 1st December arrived, and the assembled delegates were still waiting to hear Mr Gandhi's final speech. Mr Ramsay MacDonald, with well-appreciated courtesy, entered the Throne Room shortly after midnight, so that he might himself hear what Mr Gandhi had to say. First of all there fell an eloquent speech from the lips of Mr Srinivasa Sastri, who begged the Mahatma to forget old scores and to follow the paths of peace and co-operation. There is not the slightest doubt that his speech won the enthusiastic approval of all the other delegates present—all save Mr Gandhi.

Mr Gandhi was not sure. Decisions had been made not by him, but by the British Government. Perhaps he liked those decisions. In his own heart he craved for peace. But then he represented a party, and, however pitiable his performance in London had been, it was his duty as a party leader not to betray his followers. If the Government was right, he could either say so openly and court dismissal, or he could suspend the expression of judgment, return to India and urge his Working Committee to see the Government proposals in a favourable light. He had often played the party game badly; but this did not mean that he was always to play it badly. He had to "educate his party." Fair-minded men can see his position lurking behind the last speech delivered shortly before two in the morning. Civil Disobedience, he declared, was a better weapon for the winning of freedom than force. The British Government would have to succumb to it, just as the Government of

General Smuts had succumbed to it after a fight lasting eight years. But he hoped to achieve an honourable settlement "without having to put the millions of my countrymen, and even children, through this ordeal of fire." "I do not want to break the bond between England and India, but I do want to transform that bond." "I want to turn the truce that was arrived at in Delhi into a permanent settlement" — comforting sentiments hedged by many qualifying statements. The Prime Minister returned to Downing Street and was in bed by three o'clock. At least, he assured himself that Mr Gandhi did not stand committed to a definite repudiation of the Government policy. Three hours later the Prime Minister had risen. He was preparing his speech for the closing session at St James's.

That morning Indian news occupied the principal space in most of the London journals. This was not because the closing session of the Conference was about to be held, nor because each delegate in turn had been making a grandiloquent speech. Such popular interest in the proceedings was not to be expected. Instead, there loomed the ominous announcement that the Viceroy had sanctioned new Ordinances for Bengal. These Ordinances allowed for the death sentence without trial by jury, and permitted collective fines upon whole villages and districts. In the opinion of the Government of Bengal and the India Office, the Ordinances were imperative. But why, asked a few observers, were the Ordinances to be published on the very day Mr Ramsay MacDonald had arranged to announce the Government's policy on India? For a reply they were told that the Ordinances had been under consideration for rather a long time; it was only a coincidence that their publication synchronized with the announcement of the Government's policy. None the less, it was a coincidence that no man with an iota of political imagination would

have permitted. If Mr Gandhi had really wished for some excuse to repudiate the Conference, the India Office was giving him a weapon ready to hand. He knew perfectly well, as he entered St James's Palace for the last time, that the Government had immeasurably weakened his chances of reconciling the Working Committee.

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By half-past ten, Cabinet Ministers, an ex-Viceroy and ex-Governors were crowding into the Throne Room of St James's Palace. The spectacle presented a microcosm of political India; for the room contained a representative of every community in the country—the Nawab of Bhopal, Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, and his brother Princes; the Mahadhirajah of Dharbangar and other great *zamindaris* and landowners; the Aga Khan, leader of the British Indian delegation, and the Mohammedan delegates; Dr Moonji and other orthodox Hindu representatives; Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the influential Liberal block; Mr Edward Benthall and Sir Hubert Carr, representing the small but still vitally important European community in India; Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Sir Phiroze Sethna, representing a still smaller though wealthier Parsi community; Dr Ambedkar, representing the Untouchables; Colonel Gidney (the first Anglo-Indian to receive a knighthood) representing that loyal and unhappy community, whose traditions are English, but whose country is India. And in assumed domination of the scene sat the Mahatma, on the right of the Lord Chancellor. He was to propose the vote of thanks to the Prime Minister, and to speak even before the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. He was to deliver the speech which would indicate to the assembled statesmen of both countries whether or not he intended to revive Civil Disobedience. I was the one announcement which concerned them all, for they knew in advance the

main points of the Prime Minister's impending declaration. They had coaxed Mr Gandhi and then cold-shouldered him. Now they were waiting to see whether, as a result of this treatment, he would return good for evil.

At the appointed hour Mr Ramsay MacDonald rose to speak. The smoothness of his periods showed that he had not wasted his time between six and ten. He expressed the Government's willingness, if need be, to impose a provisional settlement of the communal dispute, " for they are determined that even this disability shall not be permitted to be a bar to progress." He referred to the proposals that Provincial autonomy should precede Federation; but, he added, " it is clear that a partial advance does not commend itself to you. You have indicated your desire that no change should be made in the Constitution which is not effected by one all-embracing Statute covering the whole field, and His Majesty's Government have no intention of urging responsibility which, for whatever reason, is considered at the moment premature or ill-advised. It may be that opinion and circumstance will change, and it is not necessary here and now to take any irrevocable decision." So the Liberals were right when they argued that the Cabinet differed about the proposal for an " all-embracing Statute "?

The Prime Minister paused to glance round the spacious Throne Room. A delegate was yawning. Another struggled hard to keep awake. A third was fast asleep. The flesh had been too weak to endure so long a spate of speech-making. Mr MacDonald promised a small working committee to carry on the work of the Conference in India. He said that he would later announce the appointment of three special committees to go out to India and report on problems of franchise, finance and the relations between the Princes. He also said that, if it were practicable, the Government would sanction the separation of Sind from the Presidency

of Bombay. Then he declared that the North-West Frontier Province would forthwith receive the full status of a Governor's Province. Loud cheers came from the Mohammedan delegates; a legislature for the North-West Frontier Province—to be followed later by Provincial autonomy—was, indeed, a daring reply to Abdul Gaffar Khan, the "Frontier Gandhi," and a still more daring challenge to the King of Afghanistan, the Shah of Persia and the autocrats of a not very distant Soviet Russia. The sleeping delegate woke up.

"It may be," said Mr Gandhi, when he proposed the vote of thanks, "that we have come to the parting of the ways." Again he was not sure. He would read the Prime Minister's speech again and again. The delegates listened intently. There were no other hints, no reference to the Bengal Ordinances, which were uppermost in his mind, and in the minds of other delegates. Within two minutes the brief and enigmatic speech had ended.

Very few of the delegates and spectators betrayed any eagerness to leave the Palace. They stood in little groups or wandered into the King's drawing-room, where refreshments were served. Mrs Naidu walked over to Mr Gandhi, and asked whether she could leave next week for South Africa; or must she go to India for the commencement of Civil Disobedience? "Go to South Africa, woman," was the prompt reply. "Nothing will happen in India for the time being."

Then Mr Gandhi adjusted his Kashmir shawl. Royal portraits watched for the last time the retreating figure of the Mahatma.

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"Nothing will happen in India for the time being." Yet in final conversations with Mr Ramsay MacDonald and Sir Samuel Hoare, Mr Gandhi did not disguise the

fact that the Ordinances would be difficult to justify to the Working Committee of Congress, to whom he must render account of his activities in London. The two statesmen were sympathetic. They advised him to discuss his difficulties with the Viceroy. On one point Mr Ramsay MacDonald and Sir Samuel Hoare were in complete agreement. If Mr Gandhi attempted to revive Civil Disobedience, the Government of India would crush all Congress activities. Mr Gandhi listened with amused incredulity. "Truth is God, and the way to find Him is non-violence." General Smuts had tried to crush civil disobedience and failed. The Government of India tried, and ended by releasing the leader, so that he might confer on almost equal terms with the Viceroy. What nonsense Sir Samuel Hoare was talking!

What sincere nonsense!

Within a week Mr Gandhi left London. Sergeant Evans and Sergeant Rogers shepherded his car through the traffic once more. There were no railway or passport difficulties to encounter, for Mr Gandhi was still the guest of His Majesty's Government.

"Are the children's toys safe?" he asked suddenly.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

An Ambassador returns

SERGEANT EVANS and Sergeant Rogers presented their French successors to Mr Gandhi, and then took their leave. They left Mr Gandhi in a country which gave him spiritually a new and less-trammelled environment. In London it was his business to discuss and reason with delegates who held views far different from his own, and it was his affliction to attend the proceedings of the tedious Federal Structure Sub-Committee morning after morning. If he slipped away to discuss at Lambeth or at Churt the ideas which alone raised him from the customary levels of politicians, he was held to be wasting time. Fundamentally, his ideas were the one thing that mattered, and these he had preserved untarnished in London. If the world hated the spectre of war, if those thousands of men and women whom he had watched in the silence of 11th November were resolute in their determination to boycott war, why should they not listen to his doctrine of non-violence? If Englishmen fretted over the implications of the financial crisis through which their country was passing and believed —as they seemed then to do—that the standards of living were to become progressively lower, why should they not heed the words of one who had found freedom in poverty and strength in renunciation? If the machine age created its Frankenstein monster, which poured out more goods than the world was capable of consuming, had not the exponent of *swadeshi* some message which suffering men and women have longed to receive? They would have listened to him as Victorians listened to Ruskin and Edwardians to Tolstoy. His would have been the voice of

a prophet whom alas! only literary men and Labour leaders take seriously. It was necessary for him to be immersed in politics in South Africa, in India and in England for his moral righteousness to make any effective appeal. The test of an idea is its practicability. Mr Gandhi believes that non-violence works. He is certain that the machine does not work. At heart, he is a pragmatist.

Political movements in South Africa, India and England broke his life into fragments. He was expected to be preacher and seer, moral reformer and dreamer, statesman and agitator, orator and author. In his necessarily brief visits to France, Switzerland and Italy, Mr Gandhi could play the solitary and abundantly attractive part of the idealist. And it so happened that in France and Switzerland only his ideas appealed. Anglo-Saxon anxiety for the success of the Round Table Conference meant nothing. In Paris an enthusiastic crowd surged into a huge cinema, where Mr Gandhi was to speak. Paris does things on the large scale. Here was no gathering in a Friends' Meeting House, which only the spiritually elect may enter. The meeting in the cinema was for everyone—for the student and the artist, the *gendarme* and his friend, the bourgeois husband and wife. The audience revelled in ideas which some of Mr Gandhi's Anglo-Saxon friends had advised him to leave behind in India; and perhaps there was a certain amount of *Schadenfreude*, since Mr Gandhi still continued to be a source of nuisance and anxiety to the British Government, which had so recently upset the Bourse by departing from the gold standard.

From Paris, Mr Gandhi went to Villeneuve, to stay with M. Romain Rolland, his first biographer, who had become a confirmed invalid and was confined to his bedroom. The two men had not met before. The room itself presented difficulties to a man not always at his ease, for it was

surrounded by the busts of each of M. Rolland's heroes. These were Goethe, Beethoven, Tolstoy, Gorki, Tagore, Einstein and Gandhi. Tolstoy and Tagore, Mr Gandhi might recognize as kindred spirits. But Goethe, Beethoven, Einstein? It may be that M. Rolland detected this perplexity, for very soon he was giving his friends, so Miss Lester tells us, "the perfect joy" of hearing him "interpret Beethoven at the piano." And since Mr Gandhi is unfailingly polite, he probably did not remind his host that his defective ear disabled him even from keeping time at his dancing lesson. Music with a slightly more personal appeal, however, was heard from the Chillon School below the villa where, on the night of Gandhi's arrival, American and English schoolboys were lustily singing *Rule Britannia*. Their patriotism—of the English schoolboys, at least—did not prevent them from crowding round M. Rolland's garden gate next morning, asking first for Mr Gandhi's autograph and then for an address in the school hall. Jack Hobbs could not have been better treated.

General Moris met the train at Rome. The tall, white-haired, proud soldier was honoured to entertain one who had been so recently the guest of his friend, M. Rolland. Was there anything, General Moris asked, that Mr Gandhi wished to see? Mr Gandhi wanted very definitely to have an audience with the Pope, and to be received by Signor Mussolini. Apparently, neither audience had been arranged, and General Moris was uncertain what to do. There followed telephonic communication with the Vatican and the Villa Venezia. The Duce would receive Mr Gandhi at six in the evening. But the Pope? The reply from the Vatican was disappointing. His Holiness was giving a number of audiences. He had not been warned of Mr Gandhi's arrival. Moreover, Mr Gandhi's visit to Rome was very brief, and it would have been possible to grant him an

audience only at a time when His Holiness never grants audiences at all.

It is an easy surmise that the Pope was far from eager to receive Mr Gandhi. He knew England well. He, too, had visited Oxford and found himself surrounded by admiring dons. But he had been a scholar among scholars. He worked in the Bodleian Library, and Bodley's Librarian never forgot that, as Prefect of the Ambrosian Library, Monsignor Ratti was custodian of a library as famous as his own.

Monsignor Ratti stayed with Dr Wickham Legge, the courtly physician who was once tutor to Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany. His great friend was Henry Masterman Bannister, the Anglican liturgiologist who lived in Rome until pro-German Cardinals during the War reminded him sharply that his presence was no longer welcomed; and then Bannister found consolation in his closing years by acting as Sub-Librarian of the Bodleian. From the lips of Legge and Bannister, Monsignor Ratti heard often of plans for Anglican reunion with Rome. He knew personally some of the men who participated in the Malines conversations, and when, as Pope Pius the Eleventh, he authorized Masses for the conversion of Anglicans, he was thinking of men whom he had known intimately, whose scholarship and character had attracted him, and whom he longed passionately to bring within the fold of Rome.

But these friends were men mostly of a conservative persuasion. They did not like innovations. Woodrow Wilson's visit to England had puzzled them. The fact that the president of a republic could stay at Buckingham Palace and receive all the honours due to the head of a Sovereign State convinced them that they were no longer in sympathy with the spirit of the times. And when, more than a decade later, Mr Gandhi came half-dressed to London and unceremoniously remained seated while making his seditious

speeches, there was nothing to be said. Mr Gandhi had failed: perhaps his failure would teach the present governors of England that little is to be gained from compromise with Radicalism and sedition. The dons who knew Monsignor Ratti were certainly not the dons who prided themselves on knowing Mr Gandhi.

Or was there a profounder reason for the Pope's reluctance to see Mr Gandhi? Missionaries of the Church of England and of the Free Churches were fond of calling Mr Gandhi "not a Christian, but a friend of Christ." Suppose he were the enemy of Christendom? The Portuguese, when they made their settlements in Goa, Diu, Daman and Bassein, conquered *ad majorem gloriam Dei*. They were zealous in acquiring converts to Christianity and Catholicism, and, whether or not posterity can admire the methods which they frequently employed, their conversions have had a permanent effect; for the Goans and the East Indians of Bombay and the island of Salsette are among the most loyal sons of their Church. Their devotion is proof that Christianity—or, at least, Catholic Christianity—can be made acceptable to the people of India. The Christians with whom Mr Gandhi lived in London and in South Africa were all, without exception, of a Protestant persuasion. They could scarcely offer him the *magisterium* of a Church.

The logical conclusion of Protestantism, it has been said, is agnosticism; and here were men and women—themselves possessing the deepest faith in their Lord—offering welcome to one who not only declined to believe in the divinity of Christ, but saw no reason for the renunciation of Hinduism, which, he claimed, was in no way inferior to the other great religions of the world. Mr Gandhi's Christian friends were offering him a fellowship which some of them, at least, would have denied to Unitarians. There is an old Hindu dogma, dear to Mr Gandhi's heart: "If a

man reaches the heart of his own religion, he has reached the heart of the others too. There is only one God, but there are many paths to Him." And when missionaries hear Mr Gandhi quote those words and express their whole-hearted agreement with them, how are they to interpret the explicit command of their Lord, the last words uttered before His Ascension into heaven?—" All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Those words have driven hundreds of men and women into the jungle and the sacred cities of India baptizing " in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Were they now to go into the jungle and the sacred cities to learn that " if a man reaches the heart of his own religion, he has reached the heart of the others too"? And if they were—and this seems to be the view of the leading non-Roman missionaries—then clearly the Pope could not regard Mr Gandhi so favourably as did the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Chichester and the Dean of Canterbury.

Not until his ideas were formed did Mr Gandhi encounter sacramental Christianity. Cardinal Manning might have instructed him in the Catholic faith and found young Mohandas more than a willing disciple; and the new convert, we can imagine, would one day forswear the law and become a Catholic *Sannyasi*, like Bhawani Charan Banerji Vpadhyaya, whom political friends in ignorance cremated in an orthodox Hindu manner, and like Animanda, the Catholic friend of Rabindranath Tagore. Catholicism is in no way incompatible with *swaraj*. But then how was Cardinal Manning to know that the dapper little Indian

who confronted him for a brief moment was one day to become the Mahatma? Moreover, a Catholic Gandhi could hardly have fashioned the weapon of *Satyagraha*, for he would have found himself in conflict with the Doctors of the Church. A *satyagraha* believes that recourse to force is weakness, and—says Dr H. C. E. Zacharias, a Catholic of Jewish origin—" this is the fallacy of philosophical Idealism, which considers only Ideas to be real, and the heresy of Manichæism, which deems matter not only unreal, but evil; whilst in Catholic teaching man is a being normally endowed both with soul force and with brute force, the exercise of both of which is natural to him and legitimate, but which must be exercised in such a manner that soul force directs, while brute force only carries out the directions, towards a good end."

The Pope did not receive Mr Gandhi. The Vatican Galleries, however, were open to him, and he could walk into the Sistine Chapel alone.

Mr Gandhi separated himself from the *entourage*. Miss Lester and a friend went to St Peter's. " We went," she wrote in *Entertaining Gandhi*, " to say our prayers there. We roam round the tremendous place, looking out for the quiet corner we need, where, the world forgot, our thought and aspiration can become worship; where, facing Reality, we can become one with God. There are glittering, twisted, brass pillars; there are replicas of vast pictures, pricked out in mosaic, *objets d'art* by the metre. There is lace-work and gilt; there are statues sickly with sentimentality, carved or painted figures of men and women who doubtless were fine characters and well worth our study, our esteem and our emulation, but these meticulous artists, unskilled and shallow as they are, have been incapable of portraying their strength and sanity; they could only wrack their features, make them fling out exclamatory hands; no restraint, no

depth, no spirit is manifest to my friend or to me in the whole cathedral. Everything that is added to it seems to impoverish it. Pride, ugliness and worldliness seem enshrined there. . . . We go out into the Piazza for our prayers. There the sun shines through the sprays of water from a fountain, and seated on its stone rim we find ourselves in company with an old man and his great-grandchild. It's quite easy to pray now."

Meanwhile Mr Gandhi wandered, spellbound and happy, through the Vatican Galleries. The Sistine Chapel held him captive. " I saw a figure of Christ there. It was wonderful. I couldn't tear myself away. The tears sprang to my eyes as I gazed."

Then, as six o'clock approached, he walked down the great hall of the Villa Venezia with Miraben and his secretary, Mr Mahadev Desai. At the other end sat Signor Mussolini. He rose to greet them, and when the interview had ended he walked with them to the door.

The next morning the *entourage* disputed over the buildings which Mr Gandhi ought to see. A Catholic who was with them announced that he must certainly see St Peter's. Miss Lester preferred the Forum. Signor Mussolini sent a list of the buildings which Mr Gandhi should not neglect—clinics, hospitals and schools. But Mr Gandhi, unperturbed by these solicitations, took leave of his advisers and drove down to see Dr Montessori and her Roman School.

That evening, as he sat spinning and talking to Signora Albertini, the daughter of Tolstoy, General Artuzzi rushed up to announce that Royalty was arriving. Princess Maria, the King's daughter, entered with her lady-in-waiting, who carried a large basket of figs. " They are Indian figs," said the Princess.

" Her Majesty the Queen packed them for you herself," added the lady-in-waiting.

It was almost the last conversation Mr Gandhi had in Europe, for the next day was his day of silence, and not a word was spoken as he journeyed down to Brindisi and embarked on the Italian liner, the *Pilsna*, that was to take him to Bombay.

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There were to be nearly twelve days of uninterrupted peace. Away from the fret and fever of London, away from the ceremonies and attentions of the Continent, Mr Gandhi could review the position which Mr Ramsay MacDonald's final speech at the Round Table Conference had created. There were to be discussions with the Viceroy and the Working Committee. He did not know how he could reconcile the prospects of peace with the new Bengal Ordinances; but at least the Bengal Ordinances were not directed against him. Every fair-minded Englishman in India knew that the terrorists of Bengal never took their orders from Gujerat and the Sabarmati *ashram*. None the less, the existence of these Ordinances suggested that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was not alone in cultivating the "war mentality." And Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was now in prison for defying an order of the United Provinces Government. India had altered in Mr Gandhi's absence. He would have to take stock of the situation.

As he sat pondering his problem, the ship's wireless news was shown to him. It announced that during his stay in Rome he had given an interview to the *Giornale d'Italia*, saying:

"The Round Table Conference had been for Indians a long and slow agony. It had, however, served to make quite clear to the British authorities the spirit of the Indian nation and of its leaders and to mask the true intentions of England. He was returning to India in order to restart at once his struggle against England, which was to take the

form of passive resistance and the boycott of British goods. He considered that the boycott would now prove a powerful means of rendering more acute the British crisis, already difficult through the devaluation of the currency and unemployment. The closing of the Indian market to all British products would signify a substantial reduction of English industrial activity, an increase of unemployment and a new depreciation of the pound.

" Mr Gandhi concluded his remarks by lamenting that few European countries had hitherto shown much interest in the Indian problem. That was a pity, since an independent and prosperous India would mean a richer market for the products of other nations, and Indian freedom would be manifested through commercial and intellectual exchange with all countries."

The interview was exasperating and false. Mr Gandhi promptly cabled to London and denied that he had even so much as given an interview to the *Giornale d'Italia*. On the authority of Miss Lester, we are assured that Mr Gandhi gave no interviews at all while he was in Rome. Journalists were carefully warded off. The boat sailed down the Red Sea, and Mr Gandhi could think of nothing but the disastrous results that such a published interview would have. He went ashore at Aden and called on the Resident personally to deny the interview. From Government House he dispatched a cable to Sir Samuel Hoare and, as a result, felt happier.

The mischief, however, was done. In India the extremists of the Congress party took it as a definite indication that Mr Gandhi would " renew the war " immediately after he landed in Bombay. Sympathetic Englishmen thought that once more he had tricked them, and the trick seemed to them even meaner than the trick whereby he maintained his quarrel with the bureaucracy until after the *Mooltan*

had sailed. The Viceroy, who was on his way to spend Christmas week in Calcutta, soon learned that the antipathy of most Englishmen in Bengal to Mr Gandhi was altogether uncompromising. In England newspapers took it for granted that Mr Gandhi had lied and that the representative of the *Giornale d'Italia* had told "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." Public men who have often complained bitterly of misrepresentation and distorted statements in their own Press believed that what the *Giornale d'Italia* had said was true. Sir John Simon, on his return to London with members of the Statutory Commission, found that an evening paper published an interview which he had supposedly given as the P. & O. special train carried him through Paris. He denied that he had given such an interview, and the denial was accepted without further questioning. Were the denials of Sir John Simon to have a force that the denials of Mr Gandhi could not obtain? Even friends did not willingly believe that no interview had been given. Dr Edward Thompson gained from Mr Jayaker the admission that he is "elusive." "But there is no doubt that he is capable of the very highest forms of truth." Dr Thompson himself wrote: "No episode in his whole career has done his reputation graver harm. Unless it is cleared up, he will not be regarded in Continental Europe as a saint again. It was part of the reason why his arrest was taken so quietly in India." Mr Gandhi is honourable and honest, but he is "elusive." It was the criticism of Indian and English friends alike. A few days later a friend of the President of the Dáil Eireann was to write in the *Manchester Guardian* that "Mr de Valera is a mathematician whose universe has a sort of Einsteinian curve that makes him choose courses and arguments that seem crooked to the ordinary Euclidian mind." Perhaps Mr Gandhi has the Einsteinian mind, and that is why

M. Rolland has placed the busts of Einstein and Gandhi by the side of the busts of Beethoven, Gorki, Tolstoy and Tagore. But to call Mr Gandhi Einsteinian is not to dispose of the problem. We are left with the word of an Italian against the word of an Indian. The majority of Englishmen accepted the word of the Italian.

Those who knew Mr Gandhi more intimately believed that he left England with his heart dedicated to peace. The mood which would have permitted him to speak those words in Rome was not the mood in which he voyaged across the Channel. There is no other explanation for those words which, if he uttered them, were a grave error of taste and judgment. And if he gave the interview which he denies, then it is, indeed, impossible to believe that the man who called on the Resident at Aden is "capable of the highest forms of truth."

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The *Pilsna* sailed into Bombay Harbour early in the morning on 28th December, and the city seethed with excitement. For all practical purposes the Delhi Pact was broken. The Government of India had already arrested Abdul Gaffar Khan, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Sherwani. There were in existence no less than five Ordinances—"Christmas presents from Lord Willingdon," so Mr Gandhi called them. In the afternoon, Mr Gandhi met the Working Committee with their well-rehearsed proposals. The Government, they said, meant to break the truce with the Congress: there was no need for further negotiations. None the less, Mr Gandhi prevailed upon his colleagues to let him ascertain the views of the Government. He would ask, he said, for an immediate interview with the Viceroy. And this the Working Committee was determined to prevent. Mr Gandhi had conferred with a Viceroy before, and the result was a Pact in which the Government gained

all the major advantages. It was necessary to hurl Mr Gandhi into a Civil Disobedience movement before he had time to think things out. No, there was to be no request for an interview—not, at least, until Mr Gandhi had acquainted the Viceroy with the views of the Congress Working Committee. The Working Committee had outvoted him before, and so sent him to his doom in London. They would outvote him now, and so send him once more to gaol.

Within twenty-four hours Mr Gandhi was wiring to the Viceroy the following statement: "I was unprepared on landing yesterday to find Frontier and United Provinces Ordinances, shootings in Frontier and arrests of valued comrades in both on the top of the Bengal Ordinance waiting me. I do not know whether I am to regard these as an indication that friendly relations between us are closed, or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to the course I am to pursue in advising the Congress. I would esteem a wire in reply."

There was no immediate reply. In the evening Mr Gandhi met the members of the Welfare of India League, a League founded by Mr Meyer David—nephew of Sir Sassoon David, who had been the first to greet Lord Reading on his arrival at the Apollo Bundar—for the purpose of providing a common platform for Indian and English politicians. Sir Stanley Reed took the chair. In that friendly environment Mr Gandhi seemed to be speaking his true mind. He wanted peace. He paid a tribute to Sir Samuel Hoare, which angered and puzzled the Working Committee. Was he to elude them after all? The Englishmen who heard him seem to have persuaded themselves that Mr Gandhi was on the verge of breaking away from the Working Committee, even if this meant the irrevocable splitting up of his beloved Congress. Had he so opposed his colleagues, and appealed to all peace-loving people in

India, there is not the slightest doubt that thousands upon thousands of men and women would have accepted his leadership afresh. He would have wiped out the stain of failure in London. He would have revealed himself as one who is fundamentally a Conservative; for such, in fact, he is.

But how could he be sure that this was the right policy to adopt? Those Bengal Ordinances needed explanation. Sir Samuel Hoare urged him to discuss his difficulties with the Viceroy. Since then the Ordinances had been increased to five. The man who only a few months ago had quarrelled with the Acting-Governor of Bombay over some trivial miscarriage in the implementing of the Delhi Pact could not without protest or examination accept Ordinances suddenly imposed while the Delhi Pact was still officially in force. Moreover, suppose he broke away from the Working Committee? Inevitably the Committee and the remnant of Congress would move still more to the left—from the welfare of India's peasant proprietors to socialism, from socialism to communism, from non-violence to violence. In India the threat of a bloody revolution is genuine, and none knows this better than Mr Gandhi, who believes that all forms of violence are evil and frustrate the aims of those who use them. Could he, by rushing headlong into Civil Disobedience, stave off violence? He needed time to think. He was utterly alone. He needed someone with whom he could discuss all his problems. In short, he needed Lord Irwin.

Lord Willingdon was in Calcutta for Christmas week. The patience of Englishmen in Calcutta had snapped. Englishmen in Bombay saw the Gujerati politicians in their home-spun *khaddar* making determined efforts to improve the lot of the peasantry. These politicians were accessible and talked with a disarming frankness. Englishmen in Calcutta heard the shots which killed their friends and

colleagues, and only that month some brutal murders had been committed in Calcutta. On the 30th, Lord Willingdon attended the dinner of the European Association. "I venture to hope," he said, "that even at this eleventh hour Mr Gandhi, the acknowledged leader of the Congress party, who has only recently returned from England, will call a halt to these activities and will agree to co-operate with us and give us the advantage of his powerful influence to help forward the solution of the great problem that is before us —namely, to secure for the Indian people responsibility for administering their own affairs."

Next day the Viceroy dispatched his reply to Mr Gandhi. He said: "You have yourself been absent from India on the business of the Round Table Conference and, in the light of the attitude which you have observed there, His Excellency is unwilling to believe that you have personally any share in the responsibility for, or that you approve of, the recent activities of the Congress in the United Provinces and in the North-West Frontier Province. If this is so, he is willing to see you and to give you his views as to the way in which you can best exert your influence to maintain the spirit of co-operation which animated the proceedings of the Round Table Conference. But His Excellency feels bound to emphasize that he will not be prepared to discuss with you measures which the Government of India, with the full approval of His Majesty's Government, have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, the United Provinces, and the North-West Frontier Province. . . ."

On New Year's Day, Mr Gandhi sent one more telegram to the Viceroy. "I cannot," he said, "conceal from His Excellency my opinion that the reply he has condescended to send was hardly a return for my friendly and well-meant approach. And if it is not too late I would ask His Excellency to reconsider his decision and see me as a friend, without

imposing any conditions whatsoever as to the scope or subject of discussion, and I on my part can promise that I would study with an open mind all the facts that he might put before me. I would unhesitatingly and willingly go to the respective provinces and, with the aid of the authorities, study both sides of the question, and if I came to the conclusion, after such a study, that the people were in the wrong, and that the Working Committee, including myself, were misled as to the correct position, and that the Government was right, I should have no hesitation in making that open confession and guiding the Congress accordingly."

If Mr Gandhi had ended the telegram here it is difficult to believe that Lord Willingdon could have refused to see him. Even Calcutta could not have objected. But the Working Committee would not permit Mr Gandhi to send an unedited telegram. He was to tell the Viceroy about his plans for Civil Disobedience, and he continued, " the Working Committee has accepted my advice and passed a resolution tentatively sketching a plan of Civil Disobedience. I am sending herewith the text of the resolution. If His Excellency thinks it worth while to see me, the operation of the resolution will be suspended during our discussion, in the hope that it may result in the resolution being finally given up. I admit that the correspondence between His Excellency and myself is of such grave importance as not to brook delay in publication. I am, therefore, sending my telegram, your reply, this rejoinder and the Working Committee's resolution for publication."

This was more than Lord Willingdon was prepared to stand. " No Government," he replied, " consistent with the discharge of its responsibility, can be subject to any condition sought to be imposed under the menace of unlawful action by any political organization, nor can the Government of India accept the position implied in your

telegram that its policy should be dependent on the judgment of yourself as to the necessity of the measures which the Government has taken after the most careful and thorough consideration of the facts and after all possible remedies have been exhausted. . . ." Perhaps Sir Samuel Hoare remembered these exasperating telegrams when, inaugurating the telephone service between London and Bombay, on May Day, 1933, he said: "The dangerous enemies are not Eastern and Western nationalism, or Indian and British politics, but ignorance and misunderstanding. Let us then see more of each other, and let us talk to each other more and more freely. . . . A few minutes' talk will often clear up troubles that have looked very black in voluminous correspondence."

By this time Englishmen in India were thoroughly alarmed. Mr Benthall, who had just returned from London himself, called on Mr Gandhi, and so did Mr Miller, the "oil-king" and President of the Bombay European Association. Later in the afternoon, members of the Welfare of India League called, and they remained so convinced that Mr Gandhi had an open mind on contemporary issues that they cabled to the Viceroy and begged him, even at the eleventh hour, to grant an interview.

But the die was cast. Sir Samuel Hoare was not alone in believing that the Government could crush Civil Disobedience. The Viceroy and the Government of India believed it. They saw terrorism in Bengal, revolution in the United Provinces and wild disorder in the North-West Frontier Province. They were not willing to talk amiably to Mr Gandhi while the Congress under the cover of an armistice prepared for war. In the small hours of 4th January, therefore, a genial Irishman, Sir Patrick Kelly, the Commissioner for Police, called at Mr Gandhi's residence with a warrant for his arrest.

A few moments of freedom were still allowed him. He wrote out a message to Lord Irwin, which his secretary was to cable to London. It was a confession of failure. Then he called on the *entourage* to produce two watches—one was to be given to Sergeant Evans and the other to Sergeant Rogers. Friends and followers sang hymns as Mr Gandhi followed Sir Patrick Kelly down the winding stairs to the car that was to take him through the night to Yeravda Gaol.

And there is little doubt that the old man enjoyed his rest. He slept late, sometimes until eleven in the morning. Many days went by before he troubled himself with his bulky correspondence. Almost his first letter—dated 20th January—was to the children of Bow, who had given him the little basket with two woolly dogs, three pink birthday candles, a tin plate, a blue pencil, and some jelly sweets:

DEAR LITTLE FRIENDS,—I often think of you and the bright answers you gave to my questions when, that afternoon, we sat together.

I never got the time whilst I was at Kingsley Hall to send you a note thanking you for the gifts of love you had sent me. That I do now from my prison.

I had hoped to transfer those gifts to the Ashram children. But I was never able to reach the Ashram.

Is it not funny that you should receive a letter from a prison? But though inside a prison, I do not feel like being a prisoner. I am not conscious of having done anything wrong.

My love to you all. Yours

WHOM YOU CALL UNCLE GANDHI.

In April, during one of many calls, the Collector of Poona found the prisoner bright and alert, and anxious to start studying economics. "Ah, Mr Gandhi," said the Collector, "if only you had studied economics earlier, you would have saved yourself no end of bother."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

"With my Life"

EVERY Friday evening, at a fixed hour, Mr Gandhi and all other prisoners permitted to be with him sang together *Lead, Kindly Light*. And, as they sang, they were joined by others who were singing Newman's hymn at the same time —in other prisons, in the *ashram*, in religious meeting-houses in Bombay, where worshippers included Indians and Englishmen. The proposer of this corporate act was himself an Englishman, Father Verrier Elwin. Father Elwin, an Anglican clergyman, turned his back upon all the distinctions gained at Oxford to join Father Winslow in the Christian *ashram* in Poona, the Christa Seva Sangha, which he subsequently left to devote his life to the Ghonds, officially called a "criminal tribe." He knew, when he made this proposal, that he could rely upon the support of many Englishmen, and Mr Gandhi, who has never failed to welcome an Englishman's co-operation or to acknowledge an Englishman's sympathy, willingly agreed to sing *Lead, Kindly Light*. Moreover, he needed the Light as much as at any time during his crowded and eventful life. Arrest cut short the work he had most at heart. It was clear to him that Dr Ambedkar had the ear of the official world. It was no less clear to him that separate electorates for the Untouchables would mark their permanent separation from the Hindu community. It did not matter, perhaps, that he was no longer free to discuss questions like Federation and commercial safeguards, to which the Delhi Pact already committed him. He could, if necessary, leave these questions to the other members of the Working Committee. But the welfare of the Untouchables was his special responsibility.

" I claim myself," he said in London, " in my own person, to represent the vast mass of the ' Untouchables.' . . . I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the ' Untouchables,' their vote, and that I would top the poll."

As the long monotony of the weeks in gaol drew on, it became more certain than before that the Indian leaders would not reach a communal agreement. The burden of imposing a settlement would fall upon a reluctant British Cabinet. Lord Lothian and members of a special Franchise Committee were already touring India and collecting information for the Cabinet's guidance. Something would have to be done. Then on 11th March, after a night of prayer, Mr Gandhi made up his mind. He would, if necessary, " fast unto death." He wrote a long letter to Sir Samuel Hoare. For him, Mr Gandhi confessed, the question of the Untouchables " is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue. . . . I know that separate electorate is neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, I must fast unto death." Mr Gandhi, however, was not content with a " fast unto death " in protest against separate electorate for the Untouchables. He thought it likely that he would have to " fast unto death " in protest against repression. " I see no spirit of democracy," he told Sir Samuel Hoare. " Indeed, my recent visit to England has confirmed my opinion that your democracy is a superficial, circumscribed thing. In the weightiest matters decisions are taken by individuals or groups without any reference to Parliament, and these have been ratified by members having but a vague notion of what they were

doing. Such was the case with Egypt, the War of 1914, and such is the case with India. My whole being rebels against the idea that in a system called democratic one man should have unfettered power of affecting the destiny of an ancient people numbering over three hundred millions, and that his decisions can be enforced by mobilizing the most terrible forces of destruction. To me this is a negation of democracy."

It was an accurate analysis. The " diehards " were not far wrong when they declared that India would not take eagerly to Parliamentary Government. The leaders of political India assembled in London only to witness a General Election at close quarters. The men who in the past clamoured for the hanging of the Kaiser and the denunciation of the Zinovieff letter were now asking for " a doctor's mandate." And a doctor's mandate meant that in the future members of Parliament were not to interfere unduly with the activities of the Cabinet. Parliament, in other words, was to accelerate its own process of decline and degeneration. The effect of this election upon India was disastrous; for while the British Government quickly secured Parliamentary sanction for the Prime Minister's declaration, Sir Samuel Hoare was soon able to proclaim for India a twin policy of repression and reform without reference to Parliamentary opinion, still less to public opinion. Yet, in justice to Sir Samuel Hoare, it must be admitted that he was acting as constitutional custom entitled him to act. There was no genuine public opinion to which he could refer. The capital of the British Empire —one of the most parochial cities in the world—had manifestly lost interest in Indian affairs. The progress of Civil Disobedience did not concern it. So great did Mr Gandhi's failure at the Round Table Conference appear that it became indelicate for writers on Indian politics to refer to

him or to suggest that, even behind prison bars, he might still be able to express the voice of India. When Mr Oswald Birley, who had painted portraits of Lord Irwin and Mr Gandhi, submitted both of them to the selection committee of the Royal Academy, the portrait of Mr Gandhi was rejected. No political significance was to be attached to the rejection, which, the Committee emphasized, was made on æsthetic grounds. Certain clubmen thought that Mr Birley was lucky to have even his portrait of Lord Irwin accepted. But, when all is said and done, Mr Gandhi's protest against the autocratic powers of the Secretary of State was a little antiquated. The Government of one country can no longer be held responsible to the democracy or the pseudo-democracy of another. That fact alone gave the cry for reform its justification.

In due course, on 13th April, Sir Samuel Hoare replied to Mr Gandhi. He reminded him that " Lord Lothian's Committee has not yet completed its tour and it must be some weeks before we can receive any conclusions at which it may have arrived." He repeated his belief that the Ordinances were necessary. " We shall not keep the emergency measures in force any longer than we are obliged to for the purpose of maintaining the essentials of law and order and protecting our officials and other classes of the community against terrorist outrages." Then for weeks nothing more was heard. Sir Samuel Hoare communicated Mr Gandhi's letter to his chief, but neither in India nor in England did Mr Gandhi's decision to " fast unto death " become common knowledge. Father Elwin and his friends met to sing *Lead, Kindly Light*, not knowing where the Light was to lead Mr Gandhi.

The communal settlement could not be indefinitely postponed. Lord Lothian and his colleagues, now back in London, issued their Report on Indian Franchise. The

antipathy engineered towards Lord Irwin died so suddenly that Mr Ramsay MacDonald felt strong enough to include him in the National Government, and when Sir Donald MacLean died, Lord Irwin succeeded as the Minister for Education. Gossip-writers said that Lord Irwin, instead of preparing minutes on Education, was assisting Sir Samuel Hoare in preparing the communal settlement. Early in August the settlement was ready, and on the 17th the Prime Minister announced the Government's decision. It was, all things considered, the fairest decision the Government could have made. If it did not yield to Mr Gandhi's point of view, it had to remember that Dr Ambedkar was the accredited leader of the Untouchables, and that between Mr Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar there had been no *rapprochement*. None the less, Mr Gandhi's protest influenced the Government's decision, for it allowed the Untouchables to vote in the general constituencies. This meant that every candidate in a general constituency would be compelled to solicit the votes of the Untouchable electors. A candidate could not, therefore, submit an anti-Untouchable programme without seriously impairing his chances of election. The Government, however, decided that in seven of the nine provinces the Untouchables were entitled, in addition to their franchise in general constituencies, to special representatives of their own, so that the Government and the Legislature might always be in a position to hear their case fairly argued. At the end of twenty years this special representation was to cease.

The Government, knowing full well that Mr Gandhi would carry out his threat, if the communal award did not satisfy him, knowing also that a dead and legendary Mahatma could become a greater menace to British Imperialism than a living Gandhi, took courage and announced that in no circumstances would it alter the

award, except with the agreement of all the parties concerned. The onus of releasing Mr Gandhi from a " fast unto death " would fall, not on the Government, but on his own countrymen—the very people who had failed pathetically to reach a working agreement among themselves.

Within twenty-four hours Mr Gandhi completed his plans. He wrote at once to Mr Ramsay MacDonald, and announced that he would have to resist the Government's decision with his life. " The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda. The fast will cease if, during its progress, the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the Depressed Classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise, no matter how wide it is." The fast would commence at noon on 20th September. " It may be," said Mr Gandhi, in the closing words of his letter to Mr MacDonald, " that my judgment is warped and that I am wholly in error in regarding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes as harmful to them or to Hinduism. If so, I am not likely to be in the right with reference to other parts of my philosophy of life. In that case, my death by fasting will be at once a penance for my error and a lifting of a weight from off those numberless men and women who have childlike faith in my wisdom. Whereas, if my judgment is right, as I have little doubt it is, the contemplated step is but due to the fulfilment of the scheme of life which I have tried for more than a quarter of a century, apparently not without considerable success."

On 8th September the Prime Minister wrote a courteous reply to Mr Gandhi, in which he very properly denied that the communal award was in any way intended to impair

the Untouchables' membership of the Hindu community. The Government would make no immediate change. "In response to a very general request from Indians after they had failed to produce a settlement themselves, the Government, much against its will, undertook to give a decision on the Minorities question. They have now given it, and they cannot be expected to alter it, except on the conditions that they have stated. I am afraid, therefore, that my answer to you must be that the Government's decision stands, and that only agreement of the communities themselves can substitute other electoral arrangements for those that the Government have devised in a sincere endeavour to weigh the conflicting claims on their just merits." But the letter, though obviously fair, was not calculated to dissuade Mr Gandhi from his fast. This, said Mr Gandhi in his concluding letter, is a matter of "pure religion." "The mere fact of the Depressed Classes having double votes does not protect them or Hindu society in general from being disrupted. In the establishment of separate electorate at all for the Depressed Classes, I sense the injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the Depressed Classes. You will please permit me to say that, no matter how sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to a correct decision on a matter of such vital and religious importance to the parties concerned."

On 12th September the Government published the correspondence between Mr Gandhi, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State simultaneously in London and in Simla. There is not the slightest doubt that Mr Gandhi's decision made a deep impression upon his countrymen, no matter what creed they professed, or to what party they belonged. Under its influence, Mr M. C. Rajah, who represented the Untouchables in the Legislative Assembly, immediately dissociated himself from the Government's

communal award. Dr Ambedkar at first delivered a defiant speech. But he soon realized that his countrymen and many of his followers were no longer with him. Within a few days he was ready for negotiations. Pandit Malaviya, the staunchest representative of orthodox Hinduism, at once got into touch with Dr Ambedkar. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru hurriedly left Allahabad, so that he might join Mr Jayakar at a Hindu Conference, specially convened by Pandit Malaviya in Bombay. In various parts of the country caste Hindus were throwing open their temples to the Untouchables. Nor was sympathy in England for long withheld. It is said that a Cabinet Minister was one of the numerous English friends who sent cables begging Mr Gandhi to abandon his fast, and the *Times* was moved to plead that Mr Gandhi should at least be allowed to die in freedom. The Government of India, in fact, was ready to release Mr Gandhi as soon as his fast began, provided that he stayed in one particular locality, approved by the authorities. Mr Gandhi, however, would not agree to a conditional release: he was ready to die in Yeravda Gaol, where his friends, Mr Vallabhbhai Patel and Mrs Sarojini Naidu were once more fellow-inmates. Yet the Government would allow all would-be negotiators freedom of access to Yeravda Gaol, and Mr Gandhi was given every opportunity of explaining the implications of his fast. In a letter to the Bombay Government, which was published without any delay, Mr Gandhi declared: " The problem before responsible Hindus is to consider whether, in the event of social, civic or political persecution of the Depressed Classes, they are prepared to face *satyagraha* . . . not of one reformer like me, but an increasing army of reformers, whom I believe to exist to-day in India, and who will count their lives of no cost to achieve the liberation of these classes, and, therethrough, of Hinduism from an age-long

superstition. . . . It is either an hallucination of mine or an illumination. If it is the former, I must be allowed to do my penance in peace. It will be the lifting of a dead weight on Hinduism. If it is an illumination, may my agony purify Hinduism and even melt the hearts of those who are at present disposed to distrust me. . . . Fasting for light and penance is a hoary institution. I have observed it in Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is replete with instances of fasting for purification and penance. But it is a privilege, if it is also a duty. Moreover, to the best of my light, I have reduced it to a science. As an expert, therefore, I would warn friends and sympathizers against copying me blindly or out of false or hysterical sympathy. Let all such qualify themselves by hard work and selfless service of 'Untouchables,' and they would have independent light if their time for fasting has come. . . . For me, it is an expression of, and the last seal on, non-violence. Those, therefore, who would use violence in this controversy against those whom they may consider to be inimical to me or the cause I represent will simply hasten my end. Perfect courtesy and consideration towards opponents is an absolute essential of success—in this case, at least, if not in all cases."

"I am," he told members of the Press, "a 'Touchable' by birth, but an 'Untouchable' by choice." His ambition is to identify himself with "the lowest strata of 'Untouchables.'" "I have met them in Malabar and in Orissa, and am convinced that, if they are ever to rise, it will not be by the reservation of seats, but will be by the strenuous work of Hindu reformers in their midst, and it is because I feel that this separation would have killed all prospect of reform that my whole soul has rebelled against it; and, let me make it plain, the withdrawal of separate electorates will satisfy the letter of my vow, but will never satisfy the

spirit behind it, and in my capacity of being a self-chosen 'Untouchable' I am not going to rest content with a patched-up pact between the 'Touchables' and the 'Untouchables'. . . .

" My life I count of no consequence. One hundred lives given for this noble cause would, in my opinion, be poor penance done by Hindus for the atrocious wrongs they have heaped upon helpless men and women of their own faith. . . . I believe that if Untouchability is really rooted out, it will not only purge Hinduism of a terrible blot, but its repercussions will be world-wide. My fight against Untouchability is a fight against the impure in humanity, and, therefore, when I penned my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, I did so in the full faith that the very best in the human family will come to my assistance, if I have embarked on this thing with a heart, so far as it is possible for a human being to achieve, free of impurity, free of all malice and all anger. You will, therefore, see that my fast is based first of all in the cause of faith in the Hindu community, faith in human nature itself, and faith even in the official world."

" But what if death comes? " asked one of the assembled journalists.

" I have asked my son to say in my name, that he, as his father's son, was prepared to forfeit his father's life rather than see any injury being done to the Suppressed Classes in mad haste."

But Mr Gandhi, even if he were to embark on a fast that ended with his death, would not allow his humour to desert him. He ordered a set of false teeth.

. . . . . .

At noon, on 20th September, the fast began. India celebrated the event with due solemnity. Dr Rabindranath Tagore, recognizing that Mr Gandhi's action raised him

completely out of a political sphere, observed a day of prayer and fasting in his *ashram* at Santiniketan. Two days later he dressed himself in black robes and, speaking to a great multitude of people, he called upon them to destroy those social inequalities between man and man which were India's sin and sorrow, and in which India's enemies found their principal support. The Conference of Hindu leaders in Bombay was already grappling with its problem. Mrs Sarojini Naidu left the female ward to look after the fasting man and to participate in the negotiations, and Mrs Gandhi, undergoing sentence of imprisonment at Sabarmati Gaol, was transferred to Yeravda, so that she might be in constant attendance upon her husband.

Almost immediately the members of the Bombay Conference realized that negotiations could be concluded only inside Yeravda Gaol. A small group, consisting of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr Jayakar, Mr Birla, Mr Rajagopalachari, Mr Rajendra Prasad and Mr Gandhi's son, Devadas, therefore, left Bombay for Yeravda Gaol, where they found Mr Gandhi seated beneath a mango-tree. He was cheerful. But the strain of constant argument soon told upon him. Within four days of commencing his fast, Mr Gandhi was causing anxiety to his doctors. Dr Ambedkar was a hard man to persuade. He would not let an emotional environment make him betray the cause of the " Untouchables." There were crises and deadlocks, and always the last word was with Mr Gandhi. He was prepared to die. But at last the various leaders came to an agreement. In the place of separate electorates there were to be no less than one hundred and forty-eight seats reserved for the Untouchables in eight of the nine Provincial Legislatures. Though all Hindu voters were eligible to elect candidates for these reserved seats, Untouchables on the electoral roll of a constituency were to form an electoral college and choose the

four candidates who were to stand for election by all Hindus in the constituency, whether caste or outcast. Reserved seats were to continue not longer than ten years. In the Central Legislature—to which, incidentally, the communal award did not apply—eighteen per cent. of the general British Indian seats were to be reserved for the Untouchables. Finally, the leaders agreed that in every province an adequate sum should be earmarked to provide educational facilities for the Untouchables. On 24th September the leaders signed the Yeravda Pact. Then they waited, not very patiently, for the Government to announce its decision. It was the week-end, but Sir Samuel Hoare and the Prime Minister came at once to London and examined the Pact. The 26th of September arrived, and still the Government's decision was unknown. The doctors announced that Mr Gandhi had " entered the danger zone." Dr Tagore reached Yeravda Gaol from Santiniketan. He thought that if he could sing a few of his own songs it might soothe and comfort the patient. And as soon as he saw Mr Gandhi, lying in a cot beneath the mango-tree, he fell on his knees and buried his old and handsome face in the bedclothes. Mr Gandhi was too weak to speak to him. That day, however, the British Government announced its acceptance of the Yeravda Pact. It had heard of the agreement " with great satisfaction." Mr Gandhi was free to break his fast.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jayakar—two thoroughly Anglicized Hindus, more at home in the Law Courts and at the Conference in St James's Palace than in an *ashram*, or in a prison—played a strange and unexpected part in the destiny of their religion. Yet in their hearts they preferred political to religious reform, and no sooner was the Yeravda Pact signed than they tried to dissuade Mr Gandhi from the path of non-co-operation. They wanted him, despite his past failure in London, to attend the third

session of the Round Table Conference. They had, perhaps, little chance of success. But again it was the Government that took decisive action; for when Mr Jayakar called one morning at Yeravda Gaol he was told that he could not see Mr Gandhi. The prison regulations, temporarily relaxed, were now restored. Mrs Naidu went back to the female ward. The remainder of Mrs Gandhi's sentence was, however, remitted, and the Government allowed her to stay in Yeravda Gaol until her husband was well on the way to recovery.

. . . . . .

Civil Disobedience pursued a fitful and disappointing course. Strength seemed to have departed from it. Englishmen who had shown their sympathy two years ago were no longer impressed. However mistaken the Government may have been in ordering the arrest of Mr Gandhi before there was positive proof of rebellious intentions, the policy, as outlined in the Prime Minister's declaration, had won the approval, not only of Englishmen, but of moderate opinion throughout the country. Moreover, many former Congressmen—even those once prepared to suffer imprisonment—were now on the side of the Moderates. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other leaders journeyed to England for the third time, conscious that they had a great accession of moral support from their countrymen. They played their part in a Conference far from spectacular. The attractive rooms of St James's Palace were no longer at their disposal. Instead, they met in a cramped committee-room of the House of Lords. Not until its inadequacy was clearly revealed were the delegates permitted to remove to the King's Robing Room.

The delegates fought hard for many concessions. They wanted an assurance that the Indianization of the Army would be completed within a definite period. They were

not satisfied with the financial safeguards which Sir Samuel Hoare wished to impose. Yet, when they visited the Bank of England at the invitation of Mr Montagu Norman, and met many of the leading financiers, they found opinion in the City very much more conservative than they had expected. They realized, almost for the first time, that Sir Samuel Hoare could scarcely make more concessions without imperilling the position of the British Government. Sir Samuel Hoare was not the first politician to discover the power of the City in British politics. That discovery was made long ago by Oliver Cromwell.

The Conference continued until Christmas Eve, when Sir Samuel Hoare announced the decision of the Government. The Moderates were not completely satisfied, and no Indian replied. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru declared only a few days beforehand—at a poorly attended meeting in Fleet Street—that he and his colleagues would reserve judgment until they had discussed everything with Mr Gandhi. Moreover, they would not negotiate with Mr Gandhi so long as he remained in gaol.

Yet, contrary to expectation, Mr Gandhi was not released. The Government had, indeed, so far relaxed the prison regulations that he was permitted to conduct his campaign for the redemption of the " Untouchables." He contributed week by week to the *Harijan*, a paper devoted entirely to the activities of the Untouchables. Never once did he refer to politics. Yet his letters showed that he was toying with the idea of another fast. He replied vigorously to those English friends who warned him that prolonged fasts were tantamount to suicide. It is only the Protestant Christians, he observed, who misunderstand the ethics of fasting. From his cell, he watched the Hindu attempts to redeem the Untouchables, and he was far from satisfied. Caste Hindus gave their consent to the Yeravda Pact, but now

that Mr Gandhi was no longer fasting " unto death," many were anxious to treat the Pact as a scrap of paper, or to observe the letter, while disregarding the spirit. The citadels of rigid orthodoxy were hard to assail. Something must be done. He would fast again.

He would fast for three weeks. He communicated his decision to his son, Devadas, who knew, as everyone else would know, that Mr Gandhi was not to be dissuaded. It was May, the hottest month of the year in India. Though Yeravda Gaol is more than two thousand feet above sea-level, the temperature of the district during the month is seldom less than one hundred degrees in the shade at midday. The chances of Mr Gandhi's survival seemed to be doubtful. As the day for beginning the fast drew near, the Government ordered Mr Gandhi's release and imposed no restrictions upon his movements. No sooner was he released than he advised a suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement, which Mr Aney, the temporary President of the Congress, was glad to order. Mr Gandhi then accepted the hospitality of a lady in Poona. He was sure that he would survive the ordeal. Had he not reduced fasting to a science?

What would he do when the three weeks ended? He did not know. " For the moment I can only say that my views about Civil Disobedience have undergone no change whatsoever. I have nothing but praise for the bravery and self-sacrifice of the numerous civil resisters. But having said that, I cannot help saying that the secrecy that has attended the movement is fatal to its success. If, therefore, the movement is to be continued, I would urge those who are guiding the movement in different parts of the country to discard all secrecy. I would make an appeal to the country. If they want real peace in the land, and if they feel that there is no real peace, they should take advantage

of the suspension and unconditionally discharge all civil resisters. If I survive the ordeal, it will give me time to survey the situation and to tender advice both to the Congress leaders and, if I may venture to do so, to the Government. I would like to take up the thread at the point where I was interrupted on my return from England. If no understanding is arrived at between the Government and the Congress as the result of my effort, and Civil Disobedience is resumed, it will be open to the Government, if they so choose, to revive the Ordinance rule. If there is the will on the part of the Government, I have no doubt that a *modus operandi* will be found. I shall not abuse my release, and if I come safely through the ordeal, and I find the political atmosphere as murky as it is to-day, without taking a single step, secretly or openly, in furtherance of Civil Disobedience, I shall invite them to take me back to Yeravda to join the companions whom I almost seem to have deserted."

Mrs Gandhi and Mrs Naidu watched over their friend as he took to his bed, the better to conserve his strength for the three weeks' fast. In two days' time, Mrs Naidu believed that Mr Gandhi was showing all the symptoms of jaundice, and she sent an urgent message to Dr Ansari, in Delhi. Dr Ansari hurried to Poona, which he resolved not to leave until the fast had ended. He showed no anxiety. He believed that the patient would survive the ordeal.

In London, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jayakar were with Indians assisting the Joint Select Committee in its examination of the Government's White Paper. There was no need for them to be perturbed. They could offer Mr Gandhi no advice. They were politicians capable of taking a lead in the national reconstruction of India. In the national regeneration of India they could follow only Mr Gandhi's leadership.

To Mr Gandhi's innumerable disciples it seemed that the three weeks would never end. More temples were thrown open to the Untouchables, and Mr Gandhi's eldest son, who had publicly condemned his father for neglecting the education of his children and repudiated all association with Congress activities, journeyed to Poona. He wished to be reconciled to his father.

The long fast drew to a close. Mrs Naidu invited about a hundred friends to the house in Poona. Englishmen were invited too. They stood in the hall, and, at the appointed hour, Mr Gandhi's cot was wheeled in. A shudder passed through the assembly, for Mr Gandhi seemed to be a skeleton barely alive. The sheet which covered him marked protruding bones. He had grown a beard. Hindus and Mohammedans sang their hymns. Indian Christians sang *When I survey the wondrous Cross*. A little boy, an Untouchable, squeezed the juice of an orange into a glass of water. Mrs Gandhi raised the glass to the Mahatma's lips. The fast was broken.

Months slipped by. Mr Gandhi, restored to health, devoted himself entirely to redemptive work among the Untouchables. Other men continued to struggle in the political arena. Yet they debate constantly upon the future of one for whom the sands of life are fast running out. In days gone by, he has appeared as a discredited figure, and yet returned to dominate the scene. Can the descendant of Ota and Kaba Gandhi—with the flair for politics in his blood—permanently abstain from the contest? Or will retirement bring him peace?

It is a well-accepted Hindu belief that when a man has led a life of vigorous activity in the world he is entitled to spend the evening of his days in retirement and contemplation. If Mr Gandhi chooses a period of contemplation,

there is no man living who more completely deserves to enter this happy state. He has triumphed and blundered. He has sinned, as a doctor of the Church would have understood sin, and as a Greek would have understood " the missing of the mark." But the mark of a saint is not perfection; it is consecration. Who among us is to dispute his claim to the title of Mahatma? He taught his countrymen self-respect. They no longer fear the taunt—the silly taunt—of racial inferiority. He taught them to respect the individuality of all men, no matter how mean their estate may be. He made himself one with the poorest of the poor. He entered the palaces of kings in the garment worn by millions of India's peasants. So doing, he showed that the peasant with his homely but ancient and deeply rooted philosophy has yet some contribution to make to the wisdom and happiness of his fellow-men. With these achievements, it is less easy to speak of the Tragedy of Gandhi, or to bemoan too deeply the fact that at a fateful Conference he had no acceptable solution to offer. It may be that, even if he had not been born, enlightened Hindus would have recognized the sinfulness of condemning millions of men and women to an unjust condition of Untouchability. Evil does not endure. The spirit of man is ever ready to destroy evil, once it is made aware of the existence of evil. Pious Hindus have condoned Untouchability as in the past pious Christians have condoned slavery. But to Mr Gandhi belongs in ample measure the credit for having undermined the foundations of Untouchability. He will not live to see its complete disappearance; for the evil is deeply rooted. But he has lit the candle which cannot yet be extinguished. Men will forget the details of the Round Table Conference. They will in time —and with the help of the spirit of *Satyagraha*—forget the animosity they have felt towards Englishmen in India.

" We see now," said Emerson, " events forced on us which seem to retard the civility of ages. But the world spirit is a good swimmer, storms and waves cannot drown him; through the years and the centuries a great and beneficent tendency irresistibly streams."

The world spirit will surely reunite Indian and Englishman. They will learn to adapt themselves to new conditions and to embrace a new style of partnership. There are too many among us whose childhood was spent in the warm sun of India, and whose best years as adults were given to the country of their adoption, for the adventurous-minded ever to betray the true interests of India. India is ready to test our religion, our civilization and our methods of government. Whatever survives that ordeal is, indeed, pure gold.

And time will enable us to see the triumphs and blunders of Gandhi in a gentler light. He has harboured no enmity against us. Posterity will certainly number him among the friends of England. One day we shall raise a statue to his memory, as we have raised statues to the memory of Washington and Lincoln, and to the memory of others whose universal spirit transcended the conditions of their time. Perhaps that statue will be placed within one of our great cathedrals which consoled him during his last visit to England. It would not be more incongruous than the statue raised in Winchester Cathedral to the memory of St Joan.

Mr Gandhi experimented with Truth, and not a few of his conclusions have a universal validity. Struggle there must be; but who shall say that the methods of *Satyagraha* cannot replace the methods of warfare? Mr Gandhi is not gifted with great intellect or learning. Never was there a presence less calculated to impress the crowd. But the Truth revealed to one diligent seeker can liberate the multitude. The weak become strong.

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